

THE



DIAL

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ON THE ISLAND

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Translated from the Norwegian by W. W. Worster

THERE are many islands on that broken coast, and one small one called Blaamandso, a place of barely a hundred souls. But the next one to it is far bigger; three or even four hundred people there might be, with some sort of official. And a church there is too, by reason of which they call it Kirkeoen. Since I was a child there's come a post office there, and the telegraph as well.

Among these island folk 'tis always reckoned a finer thing to be from the big island; even those from the mainland were not reckoned for much by folk from Kirkeoen, though they came from the biggest place of all. They are fisherfolk all, for miles round.

All the Atlantic washes the shores of Blaamandso, so far to sea it lies. And every face of it sheer cliff, unscalable on three sides; only the south, towards the sun at noon, is a track where God and man have made a passable way up over the rock; a stairway of two hundred steps. After every storm at sea a mass of timber, planks, and wreckage comes in from the sea, and of this driftwood the boat-builders make their craft. They carry the planks up those two hundred steps, build the boats there in among their huts, to wait till winter comes, and the northward cliffs are blue with the smooth-polished ice; then, with pulley and rope, they send the boats down over that glassy scarp and launch them so. I saw it done myself when I was a child; two men stood up on the cliff above, paying out the rope, while one sat in the boat, fending it off wherever it threatened to catch. 'Twas a work of courage and care,

with now and then a quiet-voiced hail from above or below. But when the boat took water at last, the man on board would shout to his fellows: "Avast heaving now, she'll do." No more than that he said, though it seemed no little thing to have got her safely down.

The biggest hut on the island belongs to honest old Joachim, the boat-builder. There the Christmas dance was held, year after year; the place would hold four to six couples easily at a time. For the music, there was a fiddler, and beside him sat a man by name Didrik, whose office it was to make a sort of vocal harmony to the tune, and beat time heavily with both feet. The young men danced in their shirt-sleeves.

There was one young lad who went about playing host, as it were, while the others danced, and that was Joachim's youngest son, a boat-builder himself. He was looked up to by all for his skill and his clever head: Marcelius, one maiden would think to herself, and Marcelius, the next; his name was known even among the girls of Kirkeoen itself. But Marcelius thought all the while only of Frederikke, the schoolmaster's daughter, though she, to be sure, was a lady, and talked like the people in books, and so proud a creature altogether, he could never hope to win her. The schoolmaster's house was a big place too, and being no fisherman, but a man of position, he had curtains to his windows, and it was customary to knock at his door instead of walking straight in. But Marcelius held faithfully and blindly to his love. He had been to the schoolmaster's house the year before, and he came again this, going in the back way, by the kitchen.

"Godkvaeld," he would say. "I've a word for you, Frederikke."

"What's it you want with me?" says Frederikke, and goes outside with him, knowing well enough what it is.

"Only to ask if you couldn't—you know."

"Nay," says Frederikke, "that I can't. And you'd be better advised to think no more of me, Marcelius, nor put yourself in my way."

"Ay, I know the new schoolmaster man he's wanting you himself," answered Marcelius. "But it's all to be seen what'll come of your fine-lady ways."

And it was true enough, that the new schoolmaster was after Frederikke. He came from Kirkeoen, and had been to a seminary. His father was only a fisherman like the rest, but a rich man, better

off than most. There was always a store of fish on his drying ground, and pork and butter in his larder. When the son came back from the seminary, he looked as fine a fellow as the priest's son himself, who was at the university; whiskers down his cheeks and a handkerchief in his pocket and a string of elastic hanging down from his hat, to look smart. The handkerchief in particular brought him no end of chaff; 'twas a wonderful saving lad, said folk, that Simon Rust, so careful he was to keep what common folk threw away.

"He's ordered a new boat from us," said Marcelius. "And Lord send it may serve him well."

"What makes you say that?" asked Frederikke.

"Seems I can't help it," answered Marcelius. "A green strake he wants, no less; well and good, I'll paint it green. But he wants a name painted on besides, and that he'll have to do himself."

"A name on it? Whatever for?"

"Ay, did you ever hear the like? And 'tis no pleasure craft neither, but a common four-oar boat. . . . You'd better think it over, Frederikke, if you couldn't make do with me after all."

"But I can't, I tell you. I've given my heart to him."

"Given your heart to him, have you?" says Marcelius. "Well, well . . ." And he walks away.

Nearing towards Christmas came Simon Rust across from Kirkeoen, to paint the name on his new boat. He stayed at the old schoolmaster's house, and Frederikke wore her Sunday dress every day, with silk ribbons at the neck. And when the name was painted on, 'twas not many could read the Latin letters, but what it said was *Superfine*. That was the boat's name. And 'twas not many knew what that grand word meant.

Then came a fine clear starlight evening, the night before Christmas Eve. Marcelius went to the schoolmaster's house and asked to speak with Simon Rust.

"The name's dry now," said Marcelius.

"Then we'll launch the boat to-morrow," said Simon Rust.

Said Marcelius again, "It is true you're to have Frederikke?"

"Don't reckon that's any business of yours," answered Master Simon.

"Maybe not, but all the same, if you'll tell me whether or no, you shall have the boat for nothing."

Simon Rust thought that over for a bit, giving good heed to money, as had always been his father's way. Then he called Frederikke, and said to her:

"Isn't it true we're to have each other?"

And Frederikke answered yes, she had given him her heart.

And the stars were so bright, and Frederikke's eyes seemed overflowing with joy as she spoke.

On the way home, Marcelius repented bitterly that he had ever given Simon a boat for nothing. "But I'll see she's in a pretty state when he gets her," he said to himself, "I'll go down in her myself to fend off when she's launched."

He wandered on from house to house, entering none, just wandering on in the light of the stars and the aurora. Right out to the northern side of the island he went, where his tackle hung ready to take the new boat and lower her down to the sea. The Atlantic roared at the foot of the cliff. And he sat down.

Two small lights showed from a sailing vessel some way out at sea; farther off, two lights again, from a steamer, heavy and black, making to the eastward. And Marcelius thought to himself: may be as well to get on board a ship one day, and away from all. Frederikke was lost beyond hope; and a sorry business to be here on the island when she was gone. Well, well. . . . God in Heaven help and comfort her all her days. . . . And as for damaging Simon's boat, the Lord forgive him for that evil thought; never fear now, but he'd do his best to get her clear and safely down. Ay, that was the way. . . .

He got up and was turning to make for home, when there came a faint call, a cry, and he stopped to listen. Someone was coming towards him.

"Is it you, Frederikke?"

"Yes, I only came to say . . . you won't do anything . . . harm to yourself, Marcelius?"

"I was just walking a bit," said Marcelius.

But she took his arm, and said again:

"For there's no sense in taking it so to heart. And besides, I'm not quite sure myself yet."

"Not sure?"

"Oh, what's it to be?" she exclaimed. "He was all different just now. I can't trust him as I can you. He tries to get out of it sometimes. Only to-day he said, better wait and see."

Marcelius answered nothing to all this, and they walked on a little. But Frederikke, kind and thoughtful for all her trouble of mind, broke out suddenly:

"Anyhow, you mustn't give him the boat for nothing."

"No, no," said Marcelius.

At the cross roads she gave him her hand, and said, "I must go back now, or he'll be angry. He may have seen the way I went."

And they said good-night and went their ways.

Next day was calm, and the sea smooth. Honest Joachim and his two sons had been up before daybreak, getting the boat over to the tackles at the north side of the island; all the men of the place had come to help, lest the fine new boat should be roughly handled on the way. And there she hung now, a slender beauty, decked out ready for the start.

The old schoolmaster had persuaded his smart young colleague to put off the crossing to Kirkeoen until afternoon, and it was just time. Matters between the newly betrothed seemed little bettered from the night before; they walked far apart along the path, and she that should have been his sweetheart seemed uneasy in her mind. When they came up, Joachim and his men were there. All bared their heads when the two schoolmasters and their companion appeared.

"All ready?" asked Simon.

"All ready," answered Joachim. "As far as we can see."

Then suddenly Frederikke cries anxiously:

"Oh, Marcelius, be careful going down to-day. Can't someone else go down in the boat instead?"

All turned to listen.

"He's well enough used to the work," says Joachim, who was the lad's father.

"It's an ugly thing of a boat with a name on," says Frederikke.

"You don't understand, my child," corrected her father gently.

"It's a very fine name indeed."

Then says Simon Rust sharply: "I'll go down in her myself."

All tried to dissuade him, but Simon clambered up and took his place in the boat. Still they begged him not to go, but Simon answered proudly, with finality:

"No need for Frederikke to be anxious now."

"Well, make yourself properly fast," says Joachim, handing a length of line.

"Lower away," cried Simon impatiently.

The ropes were loosened, and the boat began to move. Simon found the end of his hat-guard and fastened it to a button.

A shout from Joachim, and Simon answers from below; he is over the edge now, and neither can see the other. Simon, on his dignity, answers the hails from above more and more briefly, as if making light of such a trifle; at last no answer comes at all. Marcellus, having nothing to do, stands a little way off.

"He must be midway by now," says Joachim. "A good lad enough, for sure." Then comes a hail from far below. A new sort of hail, that the men are all unused to hear: instead of "Avast heaving—she'll do," comes a cry, "Au, au," and a heavy jerking of the signal line. Those above take it to mean "Haul up a bit," and Joachim and his men start hauling. Then, sharp and piercing comes a scream from out of the depths, and a thumping of the boat against the rocky walls; as if the island itself were coughing all at once.

All turned pale; the ropes hung suddenly slack. Then a confusion of cries and questioning; "Lower a bit," says Joachim, and then again "Haul." But all know it is to little purpose now; the boat is empty; Simon has upset it and himself been dashed into the sea.

Then suddenly the church bells from Kirkeoen over the water—ringing Christmas in. A sorry Christmas it will be!

But Frederikke was thoughtful and kindly as ever; she went up to Marcellus, and said: "Heaven forgive me for the sin, but I'm glad it was not you.—What are you standing about up here for? Why don't you go down to the south side and get out a boat to look for him?"

All saw that she was right, and there was a hurrying of men across to the other side. Only Joachim, the honest old boat-builder, stayed behind.

II

"And I can't stand here holding her up for ever," thought Joachim to himself. "Either I'll have to haul up again, and that's more than I can alone, or let her down to the water." He thought it over soundly for yet a while, then he let go.

But now a strange thing happened: the rope ran out for a bare

half-minute, and then hung slack on his hands. He hauled in a fathom and let go again; the boat took water once more. The old man's face brightened, and he looked round eagerly for someone to whom he might tell the news. If the boat were only a couple of fathoms off the water, Simon Rust could hardly have been badly hurt by the fall. Only a question now whether he might be drowning down below.

"Hurry, lads," cried Joachim, hailing across to the other side. "There's a chance for him yet."

And while he still held the slack line, there came a tug; as it might be a hand grasping the side of the boat below. "Maybe it's only the wash of the water," thought Joachim. And he called down:

"Are you safe?"

But the Atlantic drew its heavy breath, and there came no answer from below.

Still he held the line. He might have made it fast meanwhile, and waited at his ease, but 'twas no time to be at ease, thought Joachim, when here was a learned man, knowing books and all manner of things, maybe called away that very hour. A powerful strange thing was life, beyond understanding. . . .

A long quarter of an hour went by. When the wind carried that way, Joachim could hear the bells from Kirkeoen, and the sound came solemnly, mysteriously. Then he heard voices down by the water; the boat with the rescue party had come round. His own boys were rowing, and they, he knew, would bring her swiftly enough. He held his breath and listened.

"There he is," cries Marcelius.

"Is he there?" calls Joachim from above.

A little after, he can feel the line he holds being loosened from the boat; he leans out over the cliff-edge and calls:

"Is he alive?"

And Marcelius calls back: "Ay, you can haul in your end now."

"Praise and thanks to the Lord," murmured Joachim. And hauling in the line, he took a quid of tobacco, and set off to the south side to meet the others on the way. An altogether honest soul was Joachim. And as he went, he could not but reckon out in his own way what had happened in the matter of Simon Rust and his narrow escape from death. . . . Simon was a learned and a wily humbug, that was about the size of it; like as not he'd tipped the

boat over on purpose, and jumped out himself, when there was only a couple of fathoms to water, and no harm. "It was a rascally trick," thought Joachim to himself.

At the waterside he came upon the schoolmaster and his daughter.

"He's safe," said Joachim.

"Safe," exclaimed Frederikke. "What do you mean?"

"He's safe."

The old schoolmaster said "Praise and thanks," as Joachim had done, and was heartily glad. But Frederikke was strangely quiet.

When the two boats came in, there sat Simon Rust at the oars, rowing with all his might; he was wet through, and feeling cold.

"Are you hurt?" cried Frederikke. "And where's your hat?"

"We couldn't find it," answered Marcelius.

"Then you might have lent him your cap at least," said Frederikke, very thoughtful now for Simon's comfort.

"He wouldn't have it," answered Marcelius.

"No, indeed, thank you," said Simon himself. "I wouldn't have it." And he drew himself up haughtily, though he was shivering with cold.

The old schoolmaster fell to questioning his young colleague and fellow-teacher about the accident, and Simon gave his account. 'Twas a wonderful strange way of speaking, thought Joachim, with the two of them together. Simon Rust explained that swimming was part of the curriculum at the seminary, and this had proved his salvation. But he had suffered the agonies of Tantalus before the rescue party came in sight. He wished, he said, to recount the entire occurrence precisely as it had happened, so that no unauthorized version should subsequently get about. . . .

"There's just one thing I'd like to know," he said, turning to Frederikke. "What did you feel like, Frederikke, when the boat upset and you thought I was lost?"

"What I felt like?" stammered Frederikke.

"And what were your first words?"

Frederikke pulled herself together quickly.

"It was I that got them to go down at once and look for you," she said.

"Good," said Simon.

Marcelius said nothing. He understood that she had given her heart to Simon Rust once more.

"We'd better go back quickly and get him some dry things," said the old schoolmaster. "Truly a miraculous escape from peril of death."

All helped to get the boats up on shore, and Marcellius made no difference between the two, but set chocks under Simon's boat as well as his own, to save warping. Then he let the others go on ahead, and walked home, miserable at heart.

That evening, Frederikke came on some errand to the house next door, but did not call in to see Marcellius. He went out on the step himself to wait for her coming out.

"Godkvaeld," he said, as she appeared. "Out walking this evening?"

"I'd an errand here," she said. "What did you think of that miracle to-day?"

"Why," said Marcellius, "I can tell you that at once. I don't call that any sort of miracle at all."

"Ho! And suppose you'd fallen out of the boat, would you have managed to get saved?"

"He didn't fall out. He jumped out when she was all but a couple of fathoms down, that's what father says."

"Jumped out? Well, that's more again than you'd have done."

Marcellius was silent.

"For you can't swim," Frederikke went on. "And you haven't learned all the things he has. You haven't learned to play the organ."

"Then I suppose you'll have each other now?" said Marcellius.

"I don't know," she answered. "But it looks that way."

Then said Marcellius bitterly: "Well, it's all one to me then; the two of you can have the boat for nothing, as I said."

Frederikke thought a moment, then she said:

"Why, yes, if it comes to anything between us, we can have the boat, as you said. But if he breaks it off with me, then it'll be you and me, and he'll have to pay us for the boat."

Marcellius showed no surprise at this decision; he only asked:

"And when shall I know what it's to be?"

"He's going home to-morrow," said Frederikke. "I suppose he'll speak about it then. But I can't very well ask him myself, can I?"

But Marcellius was to wait some months yet before he knew.

Simon Rust went home for Christmas, and nothing was settled with Frederikke before he left; then he asked several of the girls

from Kirkeoen if they would have him, and everyone was willing enough, by reason of his father's wealth. But Simon would not bind himself to any, but kept himself free to choose. At last he went so far as to try the governess at the vicarage, but she was a lady, high up in the world, and would not hear of marrying Simon Rust.

All this came to Frederikke's ears, and she fretted more than was good for her over the news.

Twelfth Night was near, and there was to be the usual dance at Joachim's, with Marcellius to play the host as he always did. The fiddler was bidden, and Didrik whose business it was to beat time with his feet was likewise warned to be ready. The lads had chosen their girls to come, and Frederikke had promised Marcellius to be there.

Then one day came a four-oar boat to the island, with a message from Simon's father, bidding Frederikke to a dance over at Kirkeoen the same evening. Frederikke got ready at once, and put on the finest she had for the occasion.

Marcellius came down to the waterside. "Well," he said, "I suppose you'll be getting it settled this time?"

"Yes, it'll surely be settled this time," said Frederikke.

And all the way across she sat in the boat looking as if she had made up her mind for good.

Old Master Rust came down to meet her, and in the evening, when the dance had begun, she was greatly in demand among the lads that were bidden. But Simon, the son of the house, was the same as ever, jesting with each and all, and most wishful to leave things all unsettled still with Frederikke.

At intervals throughout the evening coffee and drinks were served round, and old Master Rust saw to it that there was enough and to spare. He himself sat in the little side room with a few of the older fishermen. Simon took a glass now and again himself just by way of showing he was not too proud, but for the rest, it was beneath his dignity to go dancing with fisher-girls, now that he was a pedagogue, entrusted with the care of youth.

At last, when all the others had gone, Frederikke was left alone with Simon—she was to stay the night. But even now he was no more affectionate towards her than before, and she would have been foolish indeed to take an occasional nudge for the sign of a lasting passion.

"I just came out for a breath of fresh air," said Frederikke.

"That's a thing to be careful about," said Simon. "Night air's not infrequently bad for the lungs."

"What's the barn door opened for, I wonder?" said Frederikke pointing across.

Simon could not say.

"Hadn't we better go and shut it?" she asked.

They went across to the barn, and the night was bright with stars and the northern lights.

Frederikke peeped into the barn and said:

"Have you plenty of fodder in now?"

And they stepped in to see.

"There's a heap of hay there, and another over there," said Simon.

"Where?"

Simon stepped down into the hay and showed her.

And Frederikke followed after.

III

Marcelius was bidden to wait a little while yet, with a vague half-promise that he might win her after all. And again he waited patiently in hope. But when Shrovetide came, and that was in March, Frederikke was no longer in doubt, and told Marcelius, no, there was no help for it now; 'twas Simon was to have her.

"Ay, well," said Marcelius.

And he said no word of the boat this time. She might have the boat for nothing now, 'twas all one to him. Also, he had had time to prepare for his fate, and all that spring Marcelius might be seen stolidly at his work as before. But he was far from well in mind, and kept much to himself.

Days were drawing out now, and sun and warmth clearing away the snow; there would soon be an end of sending boats down over the ice-covered cliff on the northern side. The boat-builders lounged about idle for a week or so, but when the spring storms were past, and the Atlantic calm again, they set to work at their season's fishing close in round the island. On one of these trips, Marcelius and his brother earned a pretty sum of money, salving a dismayed schooner that was drifting derelict.

There was no gainsaying the fact that Marcelius was more looked

up to than ever by all on the island after this feat, and going down each day to look at the wreck, that lay moored close off the landing place, he might have been taken for the captain of the schooner himself. The Danish owners wrote and paid over the salvage; a big sum it was to the island folk, but they made it bigger still as the story was told, till at last it grew to a fabulous tale. Marcellius had made a fortune in salvage; Marcellius was about to set up in business as a trader under the style of Marcellius Joachimsen & Co. . . .

Marcellius went to Frederikke one day, and said:

"I suppose you've settled now for good that it's to be Simon?"

"Yes," she said, "it's settled now for good."

She took up her knitting and walked across home with him. On the way she said:

"If it had been like the old days now, I'd have asked you to row across to Simon and bring him back. But you're a great man now, Marcellius."

"Why as to that," said Marcellius, "I'll show you I'm no more than I was."

And he went off faithfully and rowed across to fetch Simon.

After Simon had been and gone back again, Marcellius waited his chance to speak with Frederikke again, and asked, in his blindness:

"You're still set on it, I suppose, with him?"

"Yes," said Frederikke. "And there's good reason now to have it as soon as may be."

"Why, then, there's no more to be said."

"You know what it is," said Frederikke, "when you've given your heart. I've never cared for any one really, but him."

Marcellius made no answer to this, seeing it was only fanciful talking like people in books. He asked her in to have a cup of coffee, but she said no, 'twas not worth his while. Then as she was going, she remembered about the boat.

"You'll hardly care about being paid for the boat now, of course," she said, "now you're so rich. Simon told me to ask you."

"I don't care about the boat," he said. "Thank the Lord, I've enough of money and suchlike for now.—They will be asking in church for you I suppose. When's it to be?"

"In a fortnight."

"What about the sheep that are out?" he asked. "Have you thought about getting them in?"

"That can wait for a week or so yet," she answered. "It's early in the year, the snow's not gone yet."

"Ay, I was only asking," he said.

They had a kind of sheep of the coarse-fleeced Iceland strain. They were left to run wild on one of the small islets winter and summer alike, getting their food as they might. Once a year they were brought in for the shearing, in the spring, when the weather had grown warm enough.

A fortnight later the bans were read for Simon Rust and Frederikke in the church at Kirkeoen. At last it was really settled between the pair of them, and the neighbours had been waiting long to see it. The very same evening Frederikke was over at Joachim's house, light-hearted and merry now as could be.

"Good luck and a blessing," said the boat-builder's wife.

"I heard your name in church to-day."

"Sure you weren't mistaken?" said Frederikke jestingly.

"Luck and a blessing," said Marcelius in his turn. "Have you thought about the sheep yet?"

Frederikke laughed at that, and said:

"You're in a great hurry about the sheep this year. What's come over you I wonder? You were talking about it ages ago."

"I only asked," he said. "It came into my mind."

"Anyhow, I was going to tell you, you can get someone to go out with you to-morrow, if you like?"

"Someone to go with me?" he repeated quickly. "But you'll hardly care about going yourself now, I suppose?"

Frederikke had half resolved not to go this spring, for reasons, but at Marcelius' crafty question she flushed a little, and said:

"Oh, indeed? And why not, I should like to know?"

Frederikke was loath to admit she had grown less active these last few weeks; she would go out this year as she had done before, and help to bring in the sheep.

Then Marcelius went out, and did not return till she had left.

Marcelius walked down the few steps to where the boat-building was done; a longish hollow, with slipways for all kinds of boats, from a ketch to a ten-oar. He straightened up the place all round, and cleaned the floor. It was towards the end of May now, and light till eleven or later at night. Then he went to the landing place, his boat was there, resting steadily on the chocks, as if it were looking at him. It was midnight before he went home.

He did not undress, but sat on the side of the bed; his elder brother was already asleep. Marcelius went to the window, and looked out. "Herregud, Herregud," he murmured softly, and going back to the bed, lay down, but without undressing. All night he lay awake, then, as soon as he heard his mother lighting the fire below, he got up, called his brother, and went down. It was only four o'clock.

"You're early astir," said his mother.

"I was thinking of the sheep," he said. "If we're to get them all in for the shearing, we'll have to be starting out in good time."

All three got ready, the two lads and their mother, and went over to the schoolmaster's, waiting outside till Frederikke appeared. Frederikke had only the serving maid with her. They were five in all when they got to the boat.

The two brothers rowed steadily and easily, the women talking together the while. The sun came up, and the islet where the sheep were pastured lay there heavy and calm, as if afloat. The sheep had marked the approach of the boat from afar, and stood now staring in astonishment, forgetting to graze. The party in the boat made as little noise as possible, not to frighten the shy beasts more than need be.

But the sheep had forgotten the coming of just such a boat the year before, and stared as if they had never in their lives seen such a vision. They let the boat come in, and in their marvellous stupidity made no move; not till the keel grounded on the shore did one old shaggy wether fall to trembling. It cast a glance at its fellows, and then again at the boat. Suddenly—just as the boat was drawn up, and the five human beings stood still for a moment on the beach—the wether decided that this was a thing perilous beyond all perils it had known; turning suddenly it dashed off wildly across the island. And the others followed at once.

"They'll be none so easy to catch this year," said the women one to another.

The party moved up over the island. The first thing to do was to get hold of a lamb, then the mother would be more easily taken. They toiled all through the morning before they managed to capture a full-grown sheep. One flock made in a fright down towards the boat, and maddened with fear, dashed into the sea; Marcelius waded out and caught them, one by one.

"Now you're all wet," said Frederikke.

The women sat down to the shearing, while the two brothers stood ready with three fresh beasts in leash. Marcellius was close by Frederikke. And the spring sun shone warm and full upon them all.

"That's my second," said Frederikke. She stuffed the wool into a sack and rose to her feet.

"Come and see if we two can get hold of one by ourselves," said Marcellius. His voice quivered strangely as he spoke.

Frederikke moved to his side, and they walked off together, out of hearing of the others.

"They're over on the other side, I think," said Frederikke.

"Let's look over here first," answered Marcellius.

And they crossed over to the north on the shady side, but there were no sheep.

"They'll be out on the point there," said Marcellius, hurrying forward. But Frederikke was no longer light of foot as she had been, and fell behind a little. Marcellius took her hand and drew her on, talking in a loud, unnatural fashion:

"Come along and I'll show you. I'll show you."

"Don't shout like that, you'll frighten them all away," said Frederikke, thinking of the work in hand.

"I'll show you," he cried again. "And I'll teach you to play the organ."

"But—whatever's the matter?" she cried, looking at him keenly. His face was changed beyond all knowing.

Then she tried to draw back, but Marcellius held her firmly, dragging her till her shoes slithered over the rocks. And suddenly she realized that he was dragging her to her death; her courage failed her, and she grew helpless. Without word or cry she was dragged to the edge of the cliff and flung over.

So paralysed was she that she did not even grasp at him to save herself, Marcellius stood there safe and sound, though he had meant they should go together.

He looked round anxiously, to see if the others were following, but there was no one to be seen. He peered down over the cliff; the heavy wash of the water came up from below; the sea had taken her already. It was his turn now to follow: he pulled down his vest and made to throw himself over, but drew back again, and looked about for a path. And clambering down, he tried each foothold carefully, lest he should slip. Then at half way, he remem-

bered that there was no need for such care—it mattered little if he fell and hurt himself now—but he moved down as cautiously as before.

The sea came right up to the face of the cliff. A few feet from the water Marcellius stopped. He took off his coat and vest; they might be of some use to another. Then clasping his hands, he prayed God receive his soul, for Jesus Christ's sake. Then he leaped.

CROCUS

BY ALFRED KREYMBORG

When trees have lost remembrance of the leaves
that spring bequeathes to summer, autumn weaves
and loosens mournfully—this dirge, to whom
does it belong—who treads the hidden loom?

When peaks are overwhelmed with snow and ice,
and clouds with crape bedeck and shroud the skies—
nor any sun or moon or star, it seems,
can wedge a path of light through such black dreams—

all motion cold, and dead all trace thereof:
What sudden shock below, or spark above,
starts torrents raging down till rivers surge—
that aid the first small crocus to emerge?

The earth will turn and spin and fairly soar,
that couldn't move a tortoise foot before—
and planets permeate the atmosphere
till misery depart and mystery clear!—

And yet, so insignificant a hearse?—
who gave it the endurance so to brave
such elements?—shove winter down a grave?—
and then lead on again the universe?

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H. G. WELLS. BY BOARDMAN ROBINSON

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HENRY JAMES: AN INTERNATIONAL EPISODE

BY VAN WYCK BROOKS

"IT'S a wretched business," said Roderick Hudson, "this virtual quarrel of ours with our own country, this everlasting impatience that so many of us feel to get out of it. Can there be no struggle then, and is one's only safety in flight?" This was the great question which, for a dozen years, had filled the horizon of Henry James. Later, in his life of Story, he was to speak of it as an inward drama that has enacted itself in thousands of breasts and thousands of lives. "There is often," he adds, in the same connexion, "a conflict of forces as sharp as any of those in which the muse of history, the muse of poetry, is usually supposed to be interested."

For several years he had been travelling uneasily back and forth between Europe and America. "The great fact for us all there [at home]," he writes in a letter from Florence, in 1874, "is that, relish Europe as we may, we belong much more to that than to this, and stand in a much less factitious and artificial relation to it." Beyond everything else there was one consideration that must have weighed heavily with him: the writers he most admired were saturated with the atmosphere of their own countries. Of Turgenev he observes: "His works savour strongly of his native soil, like those of all great novelists." Like the works of Balzac, for example, the greatest of his masters, like the works of George Eliot and George Sand, like those even of Flaubert, Zola, Daudet, Maupassant, whom he was to meet, with whom he was to talk, and who were to reveal to him so many of the secrets of the craft. Could one advance very far as a novelist without that particular saturation? There was Hawthorne, his own American Hawthorne: what light did Hawthorne throw upon this perplexing question? A light, alas, that was anything but reassuring. Hawthorne, James was obliged to remark, "forfeited a precious advantage in ceasing to tread his native soil. Half the virtue of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* is in their local quality: they are im-

pregnated with the New England air." One had only to consider The Marble Faun beside these works! "He has described the streets and monuments of Rome with a closeness which forms no part of his reference to those of Boston and Salem. But for all this he incurs that penalty of seeming factitious and unauthoritative which is always the result of an artist's attempt to project himself into an atmosphere in which he has not a transmitted and inherited property." Disturbing thoughts for a young novelist at the cross roads!

Yes; with the examples of all these other novelists in his mind, Henry James was aware that he had much at stake. Not for nothing, in spite of his fears, had he given his own country a "good trial": all the great novelists had had worlds to interpret, it was necessary to have one's world, and had any one ever heard of a novelist—a serious novelist—whose world was not the matrix of his own inherited instincts? Linger as one might in fancy over this or that alien paradise, could one ever be anything else than the child of one's own people, could one truly engraft oneself upon another civilization, engraft oneself so completely as to assimilate it and live it and re-live it and create from it? Possibly; conceivably. Still, how much one would have to risk! At the lowest estimate, one would have as it were to be born again; one would have to undergo a second education; one would have to learn the ropes of life anew; one would have to acquire by study, by concentrated effort, those innumerable elements of the soul of a people which the native absorbs with his mother's milk. Oh, one could make up stories as readily about England or France as about the land of Cockaigne! But to express the genius of the race in the manner of the masters—was *that* compassable? How easily one might succeed only in losing one's own world without gaining any other! How easily one might expend all one's energy in the preliminary effort to grasp one's material! And one would be working quite without precedent, one would be leaping in the dark. . . .

These thoughts, we may be sure, presented themselves in their full force to the mind of Henry James. They must inevitably have arisen out of the situation in which he found himself and of which the two outstanding elements were that he dreamed of being a novelist after the pattern of the greatest and that he stood in the most equivocal of relationships to the society in which he had been born. They pressed upon his troubled consciousness: at least, it is difficult

to explain otherwise why, as Mr Lubbock puts it, "the satisfaction of his wish"—to return to Europe—"was delayed for as long as it was." He had ample means, and "his doubtful health," as Mr Lubbock says, "can hardly have amounted to a hindrance, and the authority of his parents was far too light and sympathetic to stand in his way." He had seen that he could not so easily relinquish his heritage, that he must make every effort to find himself in relation to the society that had formed his instincts and that stood behind him as an infinite prolongation of his own deepest self, that some profound principle, so to speak, of the novelist's life was involved in his ambiguous position. A principle? Why was it that Dostoevsky had crushed in himself a similar dream of going to live in Europe when he perceived that in Europe he became "less Russian," when he realized that he was "capable of being absorbed by Europe?" And why was it that Turgenev returned to Russia, for a "strengthening bath," every summer, to the end of his life? And what was the significance of Renan's remark that a world lived in Turgenev and spoke through his lips, that generations of ancestors, lost and speechless in the slumber of the ages, found in him life and utterance? "The silent spirit of collective masses," said Renan, in that wonderful valedictory to the body of his Russian friend, "is the source of all great things." The great writer is the voice of his own people: *that* was the principle, the principle of which every European novelist of the first order had been a living illustration, and James had been too intelligent not to perceive it. *Il faut vivre, combattre et finir avec les siens!* And he had lingered, he had waited, he had hesitated . . . and it had been quite useless. A fixed idea had prevented him from throwing himself into the life that he feared, and that life, which he had never challenged, had grown more formidable every day. Was it a choice between losing one's soul and losing one's senses, between surviving as a spiritual cripple and not surviving at all? In any case, principle or no principle, there was only one course open to him: he must escape. And as for principles, had any one ever yet explored all the possibilities of the literary life?

It is improbable that James clearly formulated in his own mind the possible consequences of his action. It is certain, on the other hand, that what he felt, on his return to Europe, was an immense relief, an immense delight. He had crossed the Alps in 1869, and

"the wish—the absolute sense of need—to see Italy again" had oppressed him during the following year at home. He had come back, to Rome, to Florence, to Venice, before he had at last settled in Paris; he had come back, and with what sensations! Had he not grasped there, truly grasped, "what might be meant by the life of art"? Those elements of accumulation in the human picture, those infinite superpositions of history, those fragments of the festal past! Those mellowed harmonies of tint and contour, those clustered shadows amid the ruins! And the starlit nights at Florian's, and the rides on the Campagna, and the rambles over the Tuscan countryside, with a volume of Stendhal in one's pocket! . . . "I have come on a pilgrimage," says the hero of one of his early stories. "To understand what I mean, you must have lived, as I have lived, in a land beyond the seas, barren of romance and grace. This Italy of yours, on whose threshold I stand, is the home of history, of beauty, of the arts—of all that makes life splendid and sweet. . . . Here I sit for the first time in the enchanted air in which love and faith and art and knowledge are warranted to become deeper passions than in my own chilly clime. I begin to behold the promise of my dreams. . . . The air has a perfume; everything that enters my soul, at every sense, is a suggestion, a promise, a performance." . . . James' own salute—was it not?—to the "sublime synthesis" of Europe.

But Italy had not held him. He had fairly reeled through the streets of Rome in a fever of enjoyment. Rome, Florence, Venice: Italy and youth, youth and, if not love, at least moonlight—he had known them all. But he had had his wits about him; he had been systematic in the midst of his ecstasies; he had been alert. He had written Roderick Hudson during those months, and not for himself had fate and a forewarning conscience predestined such a career as that luckless artist's! He had known sweet, full, calm hours, hours in which everything in him had been stilled and absorbed in the steady perception of that wondrous panorama. In those venerable cities how life had revelled and postured in its strength! How sentiment and passion had blossomed and flowered! What a wealth of mortality had ripened and decayed! His aesthetic sense had seemed for the first time to live a sturdy creative life of its own. Yet something had always been amiss there; it was, after all, a museum world—one lingered at one's peril. Had he not found in

Rome the relics, the remnants of the ancient American group—"much broken up, or rather broken down"—Story's, even Hawthorne's group, that little circle of easy artistry and sociability which had had its high moments, moments of Mazzini, moments of the Brownings, and had listened so long to the sirens that the slow years had lapped it round and left it there, a shadow, an echo, a dream? That, in the golden air, was the doom of the American artist! And as for "Italian life," how could one ever grasp it? Italy, for an alien, was like some strange, iridescent shell-fish in the hands of a child: the living organism lurked too far within, and the shell was irrefrangible, and the shape and the colour were so entrancing that one forgot everything else. Had not Hawthorne, with all his perseverance and all his magic, shown just how helpless, in such conditions, the American novelist was? . . . No, Italy was the casket of gold, but the treasure was not hidden there. He must try the silver casket next, and then the casket of lead.

It was to Paris that James repaired when, at thirty-two, he left America for good, and "it does not seem to have occurred to him at the time," says Mr Lubbock, "to seek a European home anywhere else." Nevertheless, he remained in Paris scarcely a year: why did he go there, what did he gain from his year's adventure, and why did he leave so soon? Between the lines of his letters and his essays we seem to discern the story: to the end of his life James was to look back upon this year as, in a certain sense, his *annus mirabile*. . . . Paris. . . . It had been the second, the more essential, nursery of his intellect: what secrets he had learned there, secrets of the craft that he was never to forget! He had always known that art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints; he had always felt that the best things come, as a general thing, from the talents that are members of a group. And there in Paris he had been welcomed by the Olympians themselves—by Flaubert and Turgenev. Welcomed? Yes. It was true that they had shown little interest in his own work: they had found it—had they not?—*proprement écrit*, but terribly pale. The gentle giant from the steppes had even suggested that it had on the surface too many little flowers and knots of ribbon, that it was not quite meat for men. That was a pity: one liked to be appreciated. Still, he had come to Paris, in all piety, for quite an-

other purpose; he had come to learn, and what surprising opportunities he had encountered! Madame Viardot's Sunday evenings had not been very amusing, since he had no ear; but he had met Turgenev there, not *always* on all fours in the act of presenting some extravagant charade. And he had got the Théâtre Français by heart: he had had his precious moments even behind the scenes, behind the veil of the temple of decorum. And there had been mornings at Auteuil, in Edmond de Goncourt's study, odorous with the enchanting smell of old books and thronged with articles of vertu, redolent of the eighteenth century. Best of all, there had been Flaubert's Sunday afternoons. He had heard the old master discourse upon Hugo and recite, with his beautiful accent, the sonnets of Gautier; and he had met the disciples there, Goncourt again, straight and tall, with his pointer-like nose and his sharp glance, Zola, pale and sombre, and the indefatigable Daudet, and Guy de Maupassant, still *inédit*, with his fantastic tales, Maupassant the never absent, the apple of the master's eye. What conversation! Could one ever, in the long future, hope to hear its like again?

Memories indeed, guardian memories, memories to store away in one's mind, in one's conscience, against the famine years to come! Thick-witted England would never provide such a feast for one's insatiable craftsman's appetite. These besotted mandarins, with their truly infernal intelligence of art, form, manner: well, theirs was the only work that one would ever be able to respect. They spoiled one for the English style—save the mark!—the puffy, stuffy, hasty, padded three-decker, *informe*, *ingens*, which those amiable islanders slapped together and tossed into the face of the public. Who could forget Flaubert's thundering objurgations on that unendurable English lack of the sense of design? Design, *plan*—that was the uppermost idea in every mind at those councils at which one had assisted, silently, in one's corner—listening, while the Olympians, old and young, with what passion and what conviction, and how systematically and articulately, exchanged their free confidences on the work of the day, on the pusillanimity, the superficiality, the vulgarity of those who were *not* Olympians, and on their own schemes and ambitions. Lightness and shapeliness, grace and felicity in style, lucidity, logic, the clear image, the just word, the precise observation: true, these were the arts with which to cul-

tivate one's own garden. Counsels of artistic perfection—he had gathered an inexhaustible store.

Yes, it had been the most wonderful of years. And yet, it was strange, he had come to Paris with the idea perhaps of passing his life there, and within a year he had wearied of it all. He had found himself surfeited with the French mind and its utterance. And why? He had been welcomed by the Olympians, in a sense; but really welcomed? Had there not been abysses of mental reservation on both sides? He had been privileged to listen: that was the truth of the matter. He had had only to put in a rash word to be reminded that his place was below the salt. Even Flaubert, the huge, the diffident, the courteous and accessible Flaubert, had abused him, unmercifully, when he had presumed to make some depreciatory comment on the style of Prosper Mérimée. They were so hostile and exclusive, at bottom, these Olympians; they positively preaccepted such a degree of interest in their own behalf. Even Turgenev, whom they so much admired, had remarked that the French recognized no originality whatever in other peoples, that, apart from their own affairs, they were interested in nothing, they knew nothing. They were the people in the world whom one had to go more of the way to meet than to meet any other, and did they sufficiently requite one's effort? Did their conversation, on such terms, and beyond a certain point, compensate for that ruthless abrogation of one's *amour-propre*? One adored them as craftsmen, but otherwise? They were ignorant and complacent: they would discuss by the hour some trifle of Daudet's while they neither knew nor cared what the great George Eliot was doing across the Channel. Yes, and they were corrupt! Turgenev felt that also; quiet aristocrat that he was, he had been disgusted, again and again, by their cynicism; he had never felt at ease in the atmosphere of the Magny dinners. Flaubert was out of the picture most of the time; he was in Paris only for a few months in the winter; and with the younger men one simply could not become intimate. Was it possible that he had come to Paris too late, that he would have been more at home there in the old romantic days? If he had grown up in France . . . if he had been still in his twenties. . . . It was impossible now; and besides, there was something so harsh and metallic about these naturalists, who dissected

the human organism with the obscene cruelty of medical students, to whom nothing, or rather everything, everything but art, was common and unclean, whose talk savoured only of the laboratory and the brothel. Ah, one's tender dreams of Europe, the soft illusion, the fond hope—was *this* what lay behind the veil? Perish the profane suggestion!

Such appear to have been James' sensations, face to face with the literary Paris of 1876. He loved it and hated it, he was at once fascinated and shocked by it. He had felt himself for the first time on his mettle; his perception had been excited to the highest pitch. Never was he to forget the "sharp contagion" of that superior air, the mysteries of which he had been a witness. But that was not all: if his artistic sensibilities had been stimulated, his social and moral sensibilities had been outraged, his pride had been wounded, his romantic vision of Europe had suffered a cruel wrong. Such later reminiscences as we find here and there in his Notes on Novelists, for example, tell us very little about his real feelings at the time: it is from his writings of the 'seventies, from the general view of life revealed in those writings, and from the scattered reports one has gathered of his private conversation, that his true attitude is to be discerned. Mr Hueffer, for instance, tells us that he cherished for Flaubert, in reality, a "lasting, deep rancour," that he "hated" him, that he referred again and again to Flaubert as having abused him in the discussion of Mérimée, that he could never forgive the master for having opened his own door in a dressing-gown, and would talk of the other writers he had met "not infrequently in terms of shuddering at their social excesses," that he would relate "unrepeatable stories of the *ménages* of Maupassant." Turn to his own writings of the time, or of the years immediately preceding it. Had he not, in one of his reviews, reproved Swinburne for not striking the moral note or betraying the smallest acquaintance with the conscience? Had he not summed up his admiration for George Eliot by saying that her touchstone was "the word respectable?" And was he not to make it clear that, when he dined with members of the Comédie Française, it was only with the "more genteel" of them? In these writings of his own, as in these reports of his conversation, we distinguish at least a few of the "fifty reasons" why, as he wrote to Howells, he could not become intimate with the literary fraternity of Paris or even "like their

wares." He had fled from Boston, but he had retained, as we see, the stamp of a very small and homely world.

He had not been able to stomach these ferocious companions, not for long. But how he had acclaimed their ideas, how he had marvelled at their way of doing the very things that he had so seldom been able to like! He who had reproved Swinburne for not striking the moral note had also reproved Browning for his neglect of form; he had remarked, in another review and on the same grounds, that it was "an offense against humanity" to place Dickens among the greatest novelists; and he had been repelled by Rubens because of his wastefulness, his "careless grasp." He had been ready, in short, for this Gallic evangel of design, economy, method, and with what rapture he had embraced it! And there was something else that he owed to these mandarins, something a little painful, but at the same time infinitely exhilarating. Why had he listened to them so silently, so breathlessly? Had he not felt himself at a disadvantage, he who had waited so long in that far-away America, hesitating, irresolute, chafing to be off, he who was no longer a child and who had lost perhaps a little of his original capacity to adapt himself, to respond fully to this eagerly anticipated opportunity? How assured these men seemed, even the youngest of them: it was as if they had been born veterans of the craft. And what pace-makers they were! How disconcerting, and at the same time how enlivening! . . . He had been stirred to a passion of emulation, a "rage of determination," as he was to call it later, "to *do*, and triumph."

Fear—if we must go back to that—fear had given him wings. "There were 'movements' he was too late for," Strether is conceived as thinking in *The Ambassadors*; "weren't they, with the fun of them, already spent? There were sequences he had missed and great gaps in the procession; he might have been watching it all recede in a golden cloud of dust." Strether was middle-aged when at last he found his way to Paris; but had not James himself shared and remembered that sensation of being perhaps too late? Had he not always felt that the great life, the creative life, was a European secret, that it was almost open to question whether an American could be an artist at all? "We are the disinherited of art!" says Theobald in *The Madonna of the Future*. "We are condemned to be superficial. We are excluded from the magic circle. The soil

of American perception is a poor little barren, artificial deposit. Yes! we are wedded to imperfection. An American, to excel, has just ten times as much to learn as a European. We lack the deeper sense: we have neither taste, nor tact, nor force. How should we have them? Our crude and garish climate, our silent past, our deafening present, the constant pressure about us of unlovely circumstance, are as void of all that nourishes and prompts and inspires the artist as my sad heart is void of bitterness in saying so! We poor aspirants must live in perpetual exile." How many times, in hours of doubt, James must have shared these misgivings! One thing is clear: he was convinced that he had a long inheritance to make amends for, that he must win what others had by right of birth. "He could never forget," as Mr Lubbock says, "that he had somehow to make up to himself for arriving as an alien from a totally different social climate: for his own satisfaction he had to wake and toil while others slept."

The traces of this intense preoccupation are to be found everywhere in his early writings. "I believe in you," says Rowland Mallet to Roderick Hudson, as they set out for Europe, "if you are prepared to work and to wait and to struggle and to exercise a great many virtues." And again: "For heaven's sake, if you have got facility, revere it, respect it, adore it, hoard it—don't speculate on it." But aside from such mere fragments of dialogue as these, how does it happen that so many of James' characters are represented as having on their hands some more or less gifted protégé whose education is their principal object in life? His first novel, *Watch and Ward*, describes the bringing up of Nora, the exotic little Western waif, by her future husband Roger Lawrence. Roderick Hudson is largely the story of Rowland's endeavour to keep his extravagant young friend in the strait path of self-development. In *The Tragic Muse*, Sherringham devotes himself to educating Miriam Rooth for the stage, while Gabriel Nash's function in life seems to consist in serving as a sort of conscience for Nick Dormer. And there is *The Bostonians*, the theme of which is the struggle between Ransome and Olive Chancellor for the tutelage of Verena Tarrant. Do we not distinguish, in the continual recurrence of this motif, the vestiges of James' own absorption in the problem of educating himself? These characters are all engaged in remodelling one another, in preparing one another for a career that involves in-

finite difficulties, a career that is beset with dangers; and as we glance at the Notes of a Son and Brother, at the passage on John La Farge, we seem to discern the thought that lay at the bottom of James' mind. . . . Many were the incentives that led to the development of that steely will of his. There was the pledge that he had virtually taken to make up in his work for having missed the war. And how keenly he must have felt the necessity of justifying his expatriation! We can see in his letters how conscious he was of the eyes of Cambridge, not to mention Boston and the "Higginsonian fangs." But to return to La Farge and those earlier days at Newport: La Farge was "of the type—the 'European,'" he remarks, "and this gave him an authority for me that it verily took the length of years to undermine." And what had been La Farge's counsel to a fellow-American who had been presumptuous enough also to dream of the life of art? "The artist's serenity"—so James interpreted it—"was an intellectual and spiritual capital that must never brook defeat—which it so easily might incur by a single act of abdication." And again: "There was no safety or, otherwise, no inward serenity or even outward—though the outward came secondly—unless there was no deflection." *No deflection!* The European artist, rejoicing in his strength and his abundant resources, might permit himself an occasional lapse from the strait and narrow path, the American did so at his peril: for him a single act of abdication might signify the end of all things. "It's a complex fate, being an American," James wrote in a letter of 1872, "and one of the responsibilities it entails is fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe." That was the great battle of James' life, and who can deny that he lost it? But the extremity of the artist was the opportunity of the craftsman, and we cannot but trace to this humility the dogged perseverance that was to make him one of the great workers of literary history.

Meanwhile, to return to Paris, he had been faced with the problem of discovering a possible terrain. He had tried to take the measure of his difficulties: he had watched himself as Rowland watches Roderick—"as my mother at home watches the tea-kettle she has set to boil." Never had a man more thriftily learned the art of nursing his own talent: he was in danger, had he but known it, of one thing only, the cutting off at their source of the head-springs of experience. . . . But now a great practical prob-

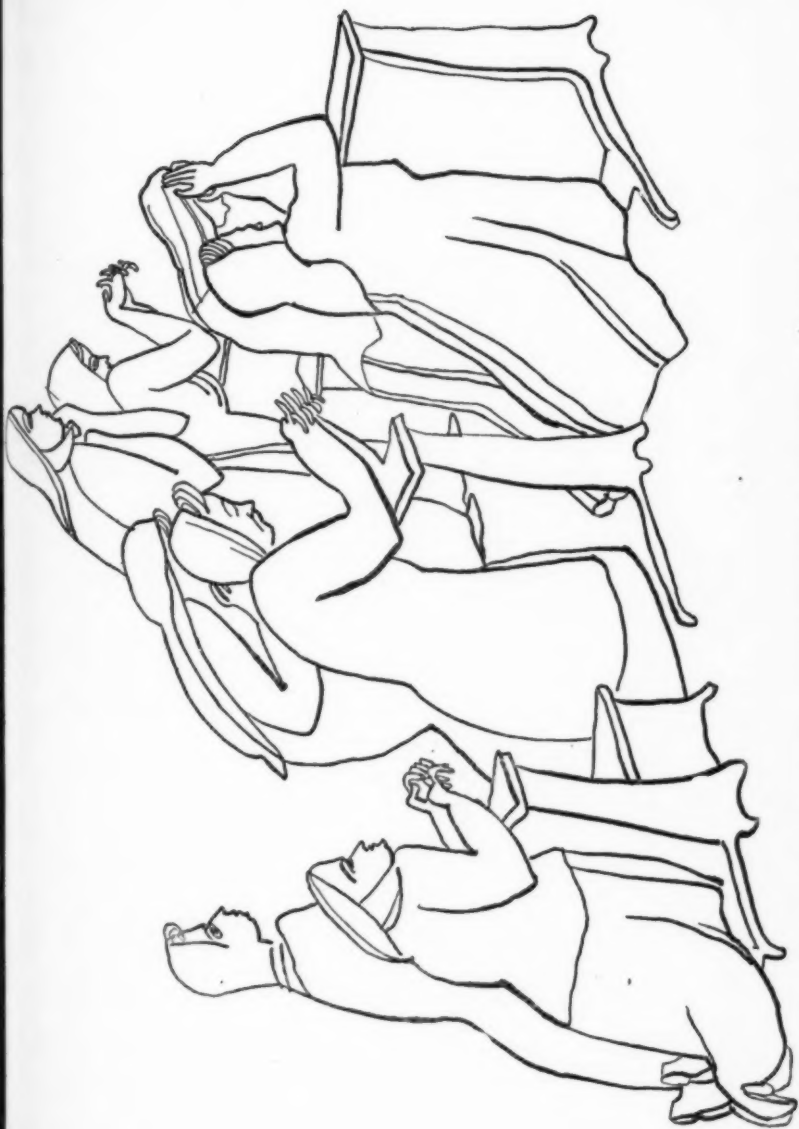
lem had risen before him: if he was to abandon America he must have another field, and where was that field to be found? . . . There was, to be sure, the world of his fellow-expatriates, the little world of the "colonies" and the tourists who, like himself, were adrift in Europe. The Henrietta Stackpoles, the Daisy Millers, the Christopher Newmans—how vastly amusing they were! He saw them with the acute receptivity of a fellow-voyager, so to speak, on shipboard: does one ever see people quite so acutely, quite so memorably, as in that relation? How startling was the contrast between these innocents abroad and the ornate, the established background against which they moved and shifted! And how well prepared he was to enter into their "predicament," their thoughts and their sensations! But after all he possessed here a very limited domain; he could survey it, he could grasp it in all its aspects, in a few months—and what then? Did not this parasitical world indeed presuppose, as it were, and all but inevitably pass one on to the "host" upon which it lived? It could not serve him for ever as a subject; he must have a more substantial, a more permanent world to represent. And in which direction was he to turn?

He found himself excluded on every side. "I feel for ever how Europe keeps holding one at arm's length," he wrote in one of his letters home, "and condemning one to a meagre scraping of the surface." And again: "What is the meaning of this destiny of desolate exile—this dreary necessity of having month after month to do without our friends for the sake of this arrogant old Europe which so little befriends us?" He had tested Italy, and he had found no one but "washerwomen and waiters," as he remarks, to talk to, waiters and sacristans and language-masters whom he had had to pay for their conversation. Where was the great world upon which his heart was set, or, rather, how was he to penetrate it? "Even a creature addicted as much to sentimentalizing as I am over the whole *mise-en-scène* of Italian life," he observes, "doesn't find an easy initiation into what lies behind it." And what, in sum, had even France yielded him? "A good deal of Boulevard and third-rate Americanism; few retributive relations otherwise." The Continent was closed to him. "I wondered of course who lived in them, and how they lived, and what was society in Altdorf," says the narrator of another of his early stories, referring to the old burgher mansions in a Swiss town through which he is passing; "longing

plaintively, in the manner of roaming Americans, for a few stray crumbs from the native social board; with my fancy vainly beating its wings against the great blank wall, behind which, in travel-haunted Europe, all gentle private interests nestle away from intrusion. Here, as elsewhere, I was struck with the mere surface-relation of the Western tourist to the soil he treads. He filters and trickles through the dense social body in every possible direction, and issues forth at last the same virginal water drop. 'Go your way,' these antique houses seemed to say, from their quiet courts and gardens; 'the road is yours and welcome, but the land is ours. You may pass and stare and wonder, but you may never know us.' Ah, that arrogant old Europe! Turn where he might, at the native social board there had been no place for James.

"I have done with 'em forever," he wrote to his brother in 1876, "and am turning English all over. I desire only to feed on English life and the contact of English minds—I wish greatly I knew some. Easy and smooth-flowing as life is in Paris, I would throw it over tomorrow for an even very small chance to plant myself for a while in England. If I had but a single good friend in London I would go thither. I have got nothing important out of Paris nor am likely to." But that was an exaggeration. Paris had not given him a field for the exercise of his talent; on the other hand, he had acquired there a doctrine, a faith, without which he could hardly have confronted the future at all. He had grown up artistically under the old dispensation in which the novelist was nothing if not the child of his own people, the voice of his own people. It was this belief, more than anything else—or so we are led to assume—that had kept him so long in America; he had had no warrant to suppose that he could ever master another world, and his leap to Europe had been largely a leap in the dark. And here in Paris he had heard of nothing but "observation": the writer had ceased to be called a voice, he had become an animated note-book. Was it not the burden of those conversations at Flaubert's that one could "get up" any subject, any field, any world, if one set to work with sufficient system and lived in one's eyes and one's ears? Had not the whole Flaubertian brotherhood listened with unqualified sympathy when Zola set forth the prodigious achievements of his own sensory organism? . . . To the end of his life James cherished for Zola a respect that we find almost inexplicable save

as the result of some profound impression that he had received in his youth; and is it not the case indeed that Zola had given him the cue for which he had been waiting? Was it true, after all, as Hawthorne had seemed to prove, that a novelist could not successfully "project himself into an atmosphere in which he had not a transmitted and inherited property?" Was it really a fact that one's "native soil" mattered so very much? Zola denied it—if not by word, at least by every implication of his doctrine: was he not himself on the very point of "getting up" Italy with a Baedeker? . . . To be sure, Zola's Italy. . . . Even if one couldn't quite compare the case with Hawthorne's. . . . But James was not in a position to look too closely into a faith that seemed to assure his own artistic salvation. There is a certain truth in Mr Lubbock's remark that he went to England "more by a process of exhaustion than by deliberate choice": he could not turn back to America, and he had found that the Continent was impracticable. And how his heart leaped at the thought of England, England on any terms!



WOMEN PRAYING IN S. APOLLINARE NUOVO, RAVENNA. BY ADOLPH DEHN



STUDENTS IN THE BORGHESI GARDENS, ROME. BY ADOLPH DEHN

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A MOSCOW REHEARSAL

BY MANUEL KOMROFF

THE rehearsal had already begun. The orchestra was dark and the stage so lit that the dust in the ornate plaster-work about the lower boxes showed to its greatest advantage.

A humble cottage room was represented in a set painted entirely with burnt umber. A door at the right, a window and stove at the left, a table in the centre covered with a peasant blue-and-white cloth, and one solitary figure in an arm-chair completed the scene.

In the front rows of the orchestra sat several people prominent in the theatrical world. Hats and coats were piled along the musicians' rail. The director stood in the centre aisle at about the sixth row shouting his directions. His face seemed long and sour as though it had been pressed in at the sides by a lemon squeezer. From time to time he would turn his back upon the stage and walk up the aisle bending over and nodding his head as though he were climbing a hill.

The electricians would creep in now and again from the side and change one or two of the amber lamps in the footlights. The actress on the stage was made up with brown paint to give her age. She rose from the arm-chair and walked up and down awaiting the decision of the director. As she would turn or bend one caught a line of bright white skin at the neck of her dress. The brown paint had not been extended far enough.

"No! No! No!" yelled the director—"Take that line over again."

The actress seated herself in the chair, twisted her head about, and said in a deep clear voice, "I think it is growing colder."

"What is it growing?" shouted the director.

"I think it is growing colder," repeated the actress.

"I don't see you feel it . . . once more."

This time she shook her shoulders before turning to the window.

"I think it is growing colder."

"No! No! No! Take it over again. Forget that you once played Juliet. You are an old woman now; forget the romance. And

don't make it tragic. . . . Don't make it important. . . . You are an old woman and it doesn't matter to you. Nothing matters—not even rats. Try it again."

Now she rubbed her hands together. "I think it is . . ."

"Just a minute, pardon me . . . Paul! . . . Hey Paul! . . . Will somebody please get him up here . . . We are waiting. Hey Paul!"

At last Paul appeared and looked out over the footlights.

"Where is your snow?"

"It's all ready, sir."

"But where is it?"

"It's ready for the performance."

"But we want it now—now; don't you understand?"

"If we use it now there won't be so much left for the performance."

"Spread a sheet and use it over again."

"But the actors walk over it with their dirty feet—and kick it all over the house."

"It doesn't matter. We must have snow now. The cue is—'I think it is growing colder.' Use what you have now and cut up more paper for the performance."

"All the paper is already used up."

"Buy more."

"Very well, sir."

During this conversation an old actor crept into the theatre. His coat was green, patched, and tattered. He walked leaning on his staff, and putting his bundle under an empty seat he proceeded towards the director. His hair was white like new snow, but matted in cords. He walked slowly and hesitated at each step.

"Once more," continued the director.

This time the actress walked over toward the window before she said, "I think it is growing colder."

Then one could see through the soaped glass of the window a fierce fall of snow.

"Paul!—Pardon me a moment . . . Paul! Where is he now? . . . Hey Paul!"

At last Paul appeared.

"Who cut up the snow?"

"The snow?"

"Yes, the snow!"

"What's the matter with it?"

"Did you ever see snow flakes four inches square? Who cut it up?"

"The boys. But they had only one scissors so they tore a good bit."

"It won't do—I tell you now it won't do. Have it cut fine and use some white paper. You have used too much newspaper—the snow looks black like a blizzard in Hell."

Paul left the stage.

"Sorry to trouble you—but once more."

Now the actress had secured a plaid shawl and drawing it about her repeated the line, "I think it is growing colder."

By this time the old actor was behind the director. "Excuse me," he said tapping the director's arm. "I've played before three emperors. . . . I am still good. Give me a part. . . . I will show you how I can blow the terror of my heart—"

"Sit down! Don't bother me now." Then turning to the stage. "That's better. That's much better. Now let's have it over again. . . . Are you ready, Paul? . . . All right, go ahead!"

Once more she shuddered in the shell of her shawl before saying, "I think it is growing colder."

But the old actor stood in the aisle and now declaimed to himself. "A man may fish with a worm that hath eat of a king, and eat of the fish that . . ."

"What do you say about fish?" shouted the director turning about sharply.

"I—I said that I played before three emperors, and I . . ."

"Don't bother me now. Sit down! . . . Paul! Where is Paul? . . . What's the matter with the snow? No! No! No! Don't cut it up now; let's have it as it is. . . . Now once more!"

Beads of perspiration came to the forehead of the actress and ran in wavy lines down her painted face. Again she drew the shawl about her and spoke her line. "I think it is growing colder." At the side of the stage near the door of the set waited two middle-aged men, dressed and painted to represent boys, ready to burst into the room and shout, "Mama, it's snowing." But they had to wait long for their cue.

"Now that's better"—spoke the director. "But I was just think-

ing that it might be improved. Now let me see. . . . Suppose you try walking toward the stove. Then speak it not to yourself, but to nobody in particular, as though it came unconsciously from your lips."

Again the line was repeated and again the director hesitated.

Once more the old actor touched him on the sleeve. "I have played before three—"

"Don't bother me now! How many times must I ask you to sit down?"

Then Paul came once more to the footlights and announced—"Shake your own snow, I am going to eat."

"Get off the stage!"

He left the stage unbuckling the straps of his overalls and his exit was followed by a sudden fall of snow. A few stray flakes fluttered into the room as the actress again repeated her line. The old actor leaned on his staff and watched the stage with eager eyes.

Passing out into the lobby you again heard as an echo: "Don't bother me now!" And once more it was followed by the everlasting "I think it is growing colder."

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

BY ALYSE GREGORY

UP to the present time Mr Sherwood Anderson has published four novels, two books of short stories, and a collection of poems. He has been termed by respective critics "the Dostoevsky of America," a great and original figure in American literature, a "phallic Chekhov," and the link that at last connects the old world with that of the new. M Fay, in devoting an article to him in a recent French magazine, mentions his earlier stories as "*purs comme l'ivoire*," and, unique among contemporary American writers, he is being rapidly translated into Russian. With the final DIAL award, Mr Anderson issued completely from those dim recesses hitherto penetrated only by enthusiastic critics and a small reading public, into the safely entrenched ranks of the so-called "best sellers."

Anxiously and hospitably one feels one's way through the pages of his novels in search for those especial qualities which have impelled his admirers to shower so unstintedly upon him their approval. Yet it is at the command of a voice that one finds oneself proceeding—a voice exhorting, suppliant, prophetic, simulating stridency, sentimentalizing, and dwindling at recurring moments to a bewildered whisper of inquiry. Never, no never, touching for more than a fleeting second that subtle art of restraint and aesthetic arrangement which we have come to associate with the most distinguished writing. Never, in spite of his continual use of the word "clean," which serves apparently all purposes, and plays over his pages like an agitated pawn vainly seeking equilibrium on a tilted chess board, giving one a sense of a technique sharp, pure, unmuddled by the stirred sediment of somewhat impuissant emotions. We move among wraiths of "purposeful" or "wistful" men, "straight," "fine" women or women misunderstood, or dulled beyond reprieve. Penetrating, imaginative passages there are, to be sure, an arresting use of a word here and there, a sense of the beauty of old weathered things, of the pitiless craft and hypocrisy of man in his most predatory moments. "How cunning they were, the men who had been successful in life. Behind the flesh that had grown so thick

upon their bones what cunning eyes." And when he notes the rapid growth of Chicago as illustrated by the marks of a lumberman's ax on logs which, once part of an adjacent grove, now remain buried under the debris of a slum district crowded with warehouses, he presents with an economy of means a convincing picture which the tediousness of his later descriptions comes near to obliterating altogether. He phrases graciously his sensitiveness to country scenes, to "the smell of violets beside woodland paths, of little fragile mushrooms, of honey dripping from the sacks under the bellies of insects. . . ." Or he shows us an old woman by likening her hands as they hold a mop or broom handle to "the dried stems of a creeping vine clinging to a tree." But these chance felicities although indicative of a certain poetic sensibility in Mr Anderson are mere by-products and do not convey the real tone and temper of his work.

With the possible exception of *Poor White* one feels that in his novels Mr Anderson is subject to an ever recurring species of shell shock which projects him *volte face* towards the prickly actualities of life, and in his efforts to regain his spiritual poise he drags one about with him in a cloud of splintering conventions and mysterious clogged desires through passages too cluttered to permit of escape into the clear light of day. Or is it, perhaps, to change our metaphor, as if Mr Anderson in a moment of somnambulism had put to sea in a row boat and being suddenly tipped over in mid-ocean manages to reach shore on a raft, having discovered in his process of escape that he has a soul, and likewise through the loss of his clothes, a body? These two facts he evulgates in his latest novel through many pages to his readers while admonishing them anxiously to help him solve the suddenly reared conflicts which sentiency always deposits at the threshold of adolescence and which only maturity through an informed scepticism can deal with adequately. And it was at this darkest moment of his maimed awakening, so one feels, that, turning to more articulate authors in search of solutions and methods, Mr Anderson permitted his own native talent to become blighted by inattention, to wilt under the glaze formed over it by the betraying phrases, thought processes, and attitudes of others. For surely this author would never have conceived alone the possibility of a mid-Western manufacturer making unmistakable love, "raping" is the word used, to his own daughter.

One has but to recall Schnitzler's writings to realize with what a fleeting and delicate touch perilous motives of this kind may be suggested without offence to one's credulity or taste. And in a passage where Mr Anderson writes of the decay and corruption which ceaselessly attack life we can hardly be mistaken in detecting a resemblance to a recurring conception and manner of Mr D. H. Lawrence's, although the American author lacks just that vulture-like sharpness of insight which enables his English contemporary to arrive so often at expression, prey clutched firmly in carrion claw. It is only in turning to his short stories that we experience a grateful though guarded relief. In his Winesburg, Ohio, and The Triumph of the Egg he has recorded in varying situations the obscure emotional states of people, wistful, restless, or maladjusted to the crass routines of life, people who do sudden strange things seeking release for thwarted desires, people who have clung lingeringly to old "pure" ideals as they passed over the curve of puberty into a world too raw for their troubled timidities. Why does one feel, however, that these stories in spite of their eloquent reply to Main Street, in spite of their occasional charm and originality, their gentleness and pity, never fully achieve art? One has but to compare even so moving and poetically conceived a story as The New Englander to de Maupassant's Miss Harriet, of similar theme, or Senility, so like Chekhov in conception, to one of that author's delicate masterpieces, to perceive the difference between writing weakened by a groping intellect and writing that arrives radiant and ineluctable from the pens of great imaginative artists. Even Mr Theodore Dreiser, with whose name that of Mr Anderson's has been so often associated, achieves in his brooding candour a freedom from the dragging weight of self-consciousness. "I am a confused child in a confused world" writes Mr Anderson in his Mid-American Chants, but it is not from confused children, however engaging they may be, that one looks for art. And with what banalities he is content to fill his pages—"she is fine and purposeful"—"hungry to the roots of her"—"He had lived clean body and mind"—"filled with the white wonder of it."

Then why, one asks oneself, in spite of so many lapses, so much obvious awkwardness in the handling of his material, so little understanding of how the minds of certain women work under circumstances of repression, so much rhetorical self-indulgence and

lack of aesthetic arrangement has Mr Anderson created for himself so large and unmistakable a following? It is, we believe, because of a certain perturbed integrity, a thwarted infantile idealism which seeks to construct a new salvation for the human race and cries out for new definitions, new sex emancipation. Where Mr Dreiser like a giant mole with strong flat hands tore up the soil and prepared the ground for a more liberal treatment of sex in American literature, Mr Anderson, nervous and mystical, follows along like the anxious white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland clasping instead of a watch the latest edition of Sigmund Freud. Dr Canby's comparison of him to John Bunyan is not, therefore, as absurd as it might seem on the surface, for there is in Sherwood Anderson a great deal of the mid-Western evangelist, an evangelist whose bigotry has been dissipated through intelligence, and whose intelligence has remained, to quote an excellent phrase of Van Wyck Brooks', "bogged and mired in adolescence." He succeeds, however, in depicting with historical perspective the disorder and meaninglessness of the American scene, the loss of our richer heritages, even while permitting such explanations to obtrude upon the development of his characters—characters which, as Mr Edmund Wilson aptly pointed out in his review of *Many Marriages* are, in so many instances, more like the figures in comic strips than actual human beings.

But unfortunately for American letters it must be conceded that when all has been said Sherwood Anderson taps on occasions deeper veins than almost any other of our contemporary novelists. Whether he will achieve a greater perfection in the short story, that realm of literature in which he is most at home, depends largely upon his ability to extricate himself from the debilitating influences of other writers and to think out his problems alone. At present, we feel, he somewhat resembles a man, who, having planted a fine bed of radishes, tends them rather carelessly and sells them before their time, so that when one comes at last to buy them in the open market they turn out, unfortunately, rather softer than any good radish has a right to be. To have attained their legitimate freshness and pungency they should, one strongly suspects, have been left to reach maturity in the promising and well-manured soil of Winesburg, Ohio.



A DRAWING. BY W. R. RYCHTARIK



A LINOLEUM CUT. BY W. R. RYCHTARIK

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THE MAN'S STORY

BY SHERWOOD ANDERSON

DURING his trial for murder and later, after he had been cleared through the confession of that queer little bald chap with the nervous hands, I watched him, fascinated by his continued effort to make something understood.

He was persistently interested in something having nothing to do with the charge that he had murdered the woman. The matter of whether or not and by due process of law he was to be convicted of murder and hanged by the neck until he was dead didn't seem to interest him. The law was something outside his life. He simply declined to have anything to do with the killing as one might decline a cigarette. "I thank you, I am not smoking at present. I made a bet with a fellow that I could go along without cigarettes for a month."

That is the sort of thing I mean. It was puzzling. Really had he been guilty and trying to save his neck he couldn't have taken a better line. You see, at first, everyone thought that he had done the killing; we were all convinced of it, and then, just because of that magnificent air of indifference, everyone began wanting to save him. When news came of the confession of the crazy little stage-hand everyone broke out into cheers.

He was clear of the law after that, but his manner in no way changed. There was, somewhere, a man or a woman who would understand just what he understood, and it was important to find that person and talk things over. There was a time, during the trial and immediately afterwards, when I saw a good deal of him; and I had this sharp sense of him feeling about in the darkness trying to find something like a needle or pin lost on the floor. Well, he was like an old man who cannot find his glasses. He feels in all his pockets and looks helplessly about.

There was a question in my own mind too, in everyone's mind—"Can a man be wholly casual and brutal in every outward way, at a moment when the one nearest and dearest to him is dying, and at the same time and with quite another part of himself be altogether tender and sensitive?"

Anyway it's a story, and once in a while even a newspaper man likes to tell a story straight out, without putting in any newspaper jargon about beautiful heiresses, cold-blooded murderers, and all that sort of tommyrot.

As I picked the story up the sense of it was something like this—

The man's name was Wilson, Edgar Wilson—and he had come to Chicago from some place to the westward, perhaps from the mountains. He might once have been a sheep herder or something of the sort as he had the peculiar abstract air acquired only by being a good deal alone. About himself and his past he told a good many conflicting stories, and so after being with him for a time one instinctively discarded the past.

"The devil—it doesn't matter—the man can't tell the truth in that direction. Let it go," one said to oneself. What was known was that he had come to Chicago from a town in Kansas and that he had run away from the Kansas town with another man's wife.

As to her story, I knew little enough of it. She had been at one time I imagine a rather handsome thing, in a big strong upstanding kind of way, but her life, until she met Wilson, had been rather messy. In those dead flat Kansas towns, lives have a way of getting ugly and messy without anything very definite having happened to make them so. One can't imagine the reasons. Let it go. It just is so and one can't at all believe the Kansas writers about the life out there.

To be a little more definite about this particular woman—in her young girlhood her father had got into trouble. He had been some sort of small official, a travelling agent or something of the sort for an express company, and got arrested in connexion with the disappearance of some money. And then, when he was in jail and before his trial, he shot and killed himself. The girl's mother was already dead.

Within a year or two she married a man, an honest enough fellow, but from all accounts rather uninteresting. He was a drug clerk and a frugal man, and after a short time managed to buy a drug store of his own.

The woman had, as I have said, been strong and well built, but now grew thin and nervous. Still she carried herself well, with a sort of air as it were, and there was something about her that appealed strongly to men. Several men of the seedy little town were

smitten by her and wrote her letters, trying to get her to creep out with them at night. You know how such things are done. The letters were unsigned. "You go to such and such a place on Friday evening. If you are willing to talk things over with me carry a book in your hand."

Then the woman made a mistake and told her husband about the receipt of one of the letters, and he grew angry and tramped off to the trysting place at night with a shotgun in his hand. When no one appeared he came home and fussed about. He said little mean tentative things. "You must have looked in a certain way at the man when you passed him on the street. A man don't grow so bold with a married woman unless an opening has been given him."

The man talked and talked after that and life in the house must not have been gay. She grew habitually silent and when she was silent the house was silent. They had no children.

Then the man Edgar Wilson came along going eastward and stopped over in the town for two or three days. He had at that time a little money and stayed at a small workingmen's boarding-house near the railroad station. One day he saw the woman walking in the street and followed her to her home and the neighbours saw them standing and talking together for an hour by the front gate. On the next day he came again.

That time they talked for two hours and then she went into the house, got a few belongings, and walked to the railroad station with him. They took a train for Chicago and lived here together apparently very happy, until she died—in a way I am about to try to tell you about. They of course could not be married, and during the three years they lived here he did nothing toward earning their common living. As he had a very small amount of money when they came, barely enough to get them here from the Kansas town, they were miserably poor.

They lived, when I knew about them, over on the North Side, in that section of old three and four story brick residences that were once the homes of what we call our nice people, but that had afterwards gone to the bad. The section is having a kind of rebirth now, but for a good many years it rather went to seed. There were these old residences, made into boarding-houses, and with unbelievably dirty lace curtains at the windows, and now and then an

utterly disreputable old tumble-down frame house, in one of which Wilson lived with his woman.

The place is a sight. Someone owns it I suppose who is shrewd enough to know that in a big city like Chicago no section gets neglected always. Such a fellow must have said to himself, "Well, I'll let the place go. The ground on which the house stands will some day be very valuable, but the house is worth nothing. I'll let it go at a low rental and do nothing to fix it up. Perhaps I will get enough out of it to pay my taxes until prices come up."

And so the house had stood there unpainted for years and the windows were out of line and the shingles nearly all off the roof. The second floor was reached by an outside stairway with a hand-rail that had become just the peculiar greasy black that wood can become in a soft coal burning city like Chicago and Pittsburgh. One's hand became black when the railing was touched and the rooms above were altogether cold and cheerless.

At the front there was a large room with a fireplace from which many bricks had fallen, and back of that were two small sleeping rooms.

Wilson and his woman lived in the place at the time when the thing happened I am to tell you about, and as they had taken it in May I presume they did not too much mind the cold barrenness of the large front room in which they lived. There was a sagging wooden bed with a leg broken off the woman had tried to repair with sticks from a packing box, a kitchen table that was also used by Wilson as a writing desk, and two or three cheap kitchen chairs.

The woman had managed to get a place as wardrobe woman in a theatre in Randolph Street and they lived on her earnings. It was said she had got the job because some man connected with the theatre or a company playing there had a passion for her, but one can always pick up stories of that sort about any woman who works about the theatre—from the scrub-woman to the star.

Anyway she worked there and had a reputation in the theatre of being quiet and efficient.

As for Wilson, he wrote poetry of a sort I've never seen before, although, like most newspaper men, I've taken a turn at verse-making myself now and then, both of the rhymed kind and the new-fangled *vers libre* sort. I rather go in for the classical stuff myself.

About Wilson's verse—it was Greek to me. Well now, to get

right down to hardpan in this matter, it was and it wasn't. The stuff made me feel just a little bit woozy when I took a whole sheaf of it and sat alone in my room reading it at night. It was all about walls and deep wells and great bowls with young trees standing erect in them and trying to find their way to the light and air over the rim of the bowl.

Queer crazy stuff, every line of it, but fascinating too in a way. One got into a new world with new values, which after all is I suppose what poetry is all about. There was the world of fact we all know or think we know, the world of flat buildings and Middle-Western farms with wire fences about the fields and Fordson tractors running up and down, and towns with high schools and advertising billboards and everything that makes up life, or that we think makes up life.

There was this world we all walk about in and then there was another world that I have come to think of as Wilson's world: a dim world, to me at least, of far-away near places—things taking new and strange shapes, the insides of people coming out, the eyes seeing new things, the fingers feeling new and strange things.

It was a world of walls mainly. I got hold of the whole lot of Wilson's verse by a piece of luck. It happened that I was the first newspaper man who got into the place on the night when the woman's body was found; and there was all the stuff, carefully written out in a sort of child's copy-book, and two or three stupid policemen standing about. I just shoved the book under my coat, when they weren't looking, and later, during Wilson's trial, we published some of the more intelligible ones in the paper. It made pretty good newspaper stuff—the poet who killed his mistress, and all that.

To get back to the poetry itself for a moment. I just wanted to explain that all through the book there ran this notion that men had erected walls about themselves and that all men were perhaps destined to stand for ever behind the walls, on which they constantly beat with their fists, or with whatever tools they could get hold of. One couldn't quite make out whether there was just one great wall or many little individual walls. Sometimes Wilson put it one way, sometimes another. Men had themselves built the walls and now stood behind them, knowing dimly that beyond the walls there was warmth, light, air, beauty, life in fact—while at

the same time, and because of a kind of madness in themselves, the walls were constantly being built higher and stronger.

The notion gives you the willies a little, doesn't it? Anyway it does me.

And then there was that notion about deep wells, men everywhere constantly digging and digging themselves down deeper and deeper into deep wells. They not wanting to do it, you understand, and none wanting them to do it, but all the time the thing going on just the same, that is to say the wells getting constantly deeper and deeper and the voices growing dimmer and dimmer in the distance—and again the light and the warmth of life going away and going away, because of a kind of blind refusal of people to try to understand each other, I suppose.

It was all very strange to me—Wilson's poetry, I mean—when I came to it. Here is one of his things. It is not directly concerned with the walls, the bowl, or the deep well theme, as you will see; but it is one we ran in the paper during the trial and a lot of folks rather liked it as I'll admit I do myself. Maybe putting it in here will give a kind of point to my story by giving you some sense of the strangeness of the man who is the story's hero. In the book it was called merely number ninety-seven and it went as follows:

"The firm grip of my fingers on the thin paper of this cigarette is a sign that I am very quiet now. Sometimes it is not so. When I am unquiet I am weak, but when I am quiet, as I am now, I am very strong.

"Just now I went along one of the streets of my city and in at a door and came up here, where I am now, lying on a bed and looking out at a window. Very suddenly and completely the knowledge has come to me that I could grip the sides of tall buildings as freely and as easily as I now grip this cigarette. I could hold the building between my fingers, put it to my lips, and blow smoke through it. I could blow confusion away. I could blow a thousand people out through the roof of one tall building into the sky, into the unknown. Building after building I could consume as I consume the cigarettes in this box. I could throw the burning ends of cities over my shoulder and out through a window.

"It is not often I get in the state I am now in—so quiet and sure of myself. When the feeling comes over me there is a directness

and simplicity in me that make me love myself. To myself at such times I say strong sweet words.

"I am on a couch by this window and I could ask a woman to come here to lie with me, or a man either for that matter.

"I could take a row of houses standing on a street, tip them over, empty the people out of them, squeeze and compress all the people into one person, and love that person.

"Do you see this hand? Suppose it held a knife that could cut down through all the falseness in you. Suppose it could cut down through the sides of buildings and houses where thousands of people now lie asleep.

"It would be something worth thinking about if the fingers of this hand gripped a knife that could cut and rip through all the ugly husks in which millions of lives are enclosed."

Well, there is the idea you see, a kind of power that could be gentle too. I will quote you just one more of his things, a more gentle one. It is called in the book number eighty-three.

"I am a tree that grows beside the wall. I have been thrusting up and up. My body is covered with scars. My body is old, but still I thrust upward, creeping toward the top of the wall.

"It is my desire to drop blossoms and fruit over the wall.

"I would moisten dry lips.

"I would drop blossoms on the heads of children, over the top of the wall.

"I would caress with falling blossoms the bodies of those who live on the further side of the wall.

"My branches are creeping upward and new sap comes into me out of the dark ground under the wall.

"My fruit shall not be my fruit until it drops from my arms into the arms of the others over the top of the wall."

And now as to the life led by the man and woman in the large upper room in that old frame house. By a stroke of luck I have recently got rather a line on that by a discovery I have made.

After they had moved into the house—it was only last spring—the theatre in which the woman was employed was dark for a long time and they were more than usually hard up; so the woman tried

to pick up a little extra money—to help pay the rent I suppose—by sub-letting the two little back rooms of that place of theirs.

Various people lived in the dark tiny holes, just how I can't make out, as there was no furniture. Still there are places in Chicago called "flops" where one may sleep on the floor for five or ten cents, and they are more patronized than respectable people know anything about.

What I did discover was a little woman—she wasn't so young, but she was hunchbacked and small and it is hard not to think of her as a girl—who once lived in one of the rooms for several weeks. She had a job as an ironer in a small hand laundry in the neighbourhood, and someone had given her a cheap folding cot. She was a curiously sentimental creature with the kind of hurt eyes deformed people often have, and I have a fancy she had herself a romantic attachment of a sort for the man Wilson. Anyway I managed to find out a lot from her.

After the other woman's death and after Wilson had been cleared on the murder charge by the confession of the stage-hand, I used to go over to the house where he had lived sometimes in the late afternoon after our paper had been put to bed for the day. Ours is an afternoon paper and after two o'clock most of us are free.

I found the hunchback girl standing in front of the house one day and began talking with her. She was a gold mine.

There was that look in her eyes I've told you of, the hurt sensitive look. I just spoke to her and we began talking of Wilson. She had lived in one of the rooms at the back. She told me of that at once.

On some days she had found herself unable to work at the laundry because her strength suddenly gave out, and so on such days she stayed in the room lying on the cot. Blinding headaches came that lasted for hours, during which she was almost entirely unconscious of everything going on about her. Then afterwards she was quite conscious, but for a long time very weak. She wasn't one who is destined to live very long I suppose, and I presume she didn't much care.

Anyway, there she was in the room in that weak state after the times of illness; and she grew curious about the two people in the front room, so she used to get off her couch and go softly in her

stockinged feet to the door between the rooms and peek through the keyhole. She had to kneel on the dusty floor to do it.

The life in the room fascinated her from the beginning. Sometimes the man was in there alone, sitting at the kitchen table and writing the stuff he afterwards put into the book I collared and from which I have quoted; sometimes the woman was with him, and again sometimes he was in there alone, but wasn't writing. Then he was always walking and walking up and down.

When both people were in the room and when the man was writing the woman seldom moved, but sat in a chair by one of the windows with her hands crossed. He would write a few lines and then walk up and down talking to himself or to her. When he spoke she did not answer except with her eyes, the crippled girl said.

What I gathered of all this from her talk with me and what is the product of my own imaginings I confess I do not quite know.

Anyway what I got and what I am trying in my own way to transmit to you is a sense of a kind of strangeness in the relationship of the two. It wasn't just a domestic household, a little down on its luck, by any means. He was trying to do something very difficult—with his poetry I presume, and she in her own way was trying to help him.

And of course, as I have no doubt you have gathered from what I have quoted of Wilson's verse, the matter had something to do with the relationships between people—not necessarily between the particular man and woman who happened to be there in that room, but between all people.

The fellow had some half-mystic conception of all such things, and before he found his own woman, had been going aimlessly about the world looking for a mate. Then he had found the woman in the Kansas town and, he at least thought, things had cleared, for him.

Well, he had the notion that no one in the world could think or feel anything alone and that people only got into trouble and walled themselves in by trying it, or something of the sort. There was a discord. Things were jangled. Someone it seems had to strike a pitch that all voices could take up before the real song of life could begin. Mind you I'm not putting forth any notions of my own. What I am trying to do is to give you a sense of something I got from having read Wilson's stuff, from having known

him a little, and from having seen something of the effect of his personality on others.

He felt quite definitely that no one in the world could feel or even think alone. And then there was the notion that if one tried to think with the mind without taking the body into account one got all balled up. True conscious life built itself up like a pyramid. First the body and mind of a beloved one must come into one's thinking and feeling and then, in some mystic way, the bodies and minds of all the other people in the world must come in, must come sweeping in like a great wind or something of that sort.

Is all this a little tangled up to you who read my story? It may not be. It may be that your minds are more clear than my own and that what I take to be so difficult will be very simple to you.

However, I have to bring up to you just what I can find after diving down into this sea of motives and impulses I admit I don't rightly understand.

The hunchback girl felt—or is it my own fancy colouring what she said? . . . it doesn't really matter. The thing to get at is what the man Edgar Wilson felt.

He felt, I fancy, that in the field of poetry he had something to express that could never be expressed until he had found a woman who could, in a peculiar and absolute way, give herself in the world of the flesh, and that then there was to be a marriage out of which beauty would come for all people. He had to find the woman who had that power, and the power had to be untainted by self-interest, I fancy. A profound egotist, you see, and he thought he had found what he needed in the wife of the Kansas druggist.

He had found her and had done something to her. What it was I can't quite make out, except that she was absolutely and wholly happy with him in a strangely inexpressive sort of way.

Trying to speak of him and his influence on others is rather like trying to walk on a tight rope stretched between two tall buildings above a crowded street. A cry from below, a laugh, the honk of an automobile horn, and down one goes into nothingness. One simply becomes ridiculous.

He wanted, it seems, to condense the flesh and the spirit of himself and his woman into his poems. You will remember that in one of the things of his I have quoted he speaks of condensing, of

squeezing, all the people of a city into one person and of loving that person.

One might think of him as a powerful person, almost hideously powerful. You will see, as you read, how he has got me in his power and is making me serve his purpose.

He had caught and was holding the woman in his grip. Perhaps too she was in her own way greedy also and he was making actual love to her always day and night, when they were together and when they were apart.

I'll admit I am confused about the whole matter myself. I am trying to express something I have felt, not in myself nor in the words that came to me from the lips of the hunchback girl whom, you will remember, I left kneeling on the floor in that back room and peeking through a keyhole.

There she was, you see, the hunchback, and in the room before her was the man and woman; and the hunchback also had fallen under the power of the man Wilson. She also was in love with him—there can be no doubt of that. The room in which she knelt was dark and dusty. There must have been a thick accumulation of dust on the floor.

What she said—or if she did not say the words, what she made me feel—was that the man Wilson worked in the room or walked up and down in there before his woman, and that while he did that his woman sat in the chair, and that there was on her face, in her eyes, a look—

He was all the time making love to her and his making love to her in just that abstract way was a kind of love-making with all people, and that was possible because the woman was as purely physical as he was something else. If all this is meaningless to you at least it wasn't to the hunchback girl who certainly was uneducated and never would have set herself up as having any special powers of understanding. She knelt in the dust, listening and looking at the keyhole, and in the end she came to feel that the man, in whose presence she had never been and whose person had never in any way touched her person, that he had made love to her also.

She had felt that and it had gratified her entire nature. One might say it had satisfied her. She was what she was and it had made life worth living for her.

Minor things happened in the room and one may speak of them.

For example there was a day in June, a dark warm rainy day. The hunchback girl was in her room, kneeling on the floor, and Wilson and his woman were in their room.

Wilson's woman had been doing a family washing, and as it could not be dried outdoors she had stretched ropes across the room and had hung the clothes inside.

When the clothes were all hung Wilson came from walking outside in the rain, and going to the desk sat down and began to write.

He wrote for a few minutes and then got up and went about the room, and in walking a wet garment brushed against his face.

He kept right on walking and talking to the woman, but as he walked and talked he gathered all the clothes in his arms and going to the little landing at the head of the stairs outside threw them down into the muddy yard below. He did that and the woman sat without moving or saying anything until he had gone back to his desk, then she went down the stairs, got the clothes and washed them again; and it was only after she had done that and when she was again hanging them in the room above that he appeared to know what he had done.

While the clothes were being rewashed he went for another walk and when she heard his footsteps on the stairs the hunchback girl ran to the keyhole. As she knelt there and as he came into the room she could look directly into his face. "He was like a puzzled child for a moment and then, although he said nothing, the tears began to run down his cheeks," she said. "That happened and then the woman, who was at the moment rehangng the clothes, turned and saw him. She had her arm filled with clothes, but dropped them on the floor and ran to him. She half knelt, the hunchback girl said, and putting her arms about his body and looking up into his face pleaded with him. "Don't. Don't be hurt. Believe me I know everything. Please don't be hurt," was what she said.

And now as to the story of the woman's death. It happened in the fall of that year.

In the place where she was sometimes employed, that is to say in the theatre, there was this other man, the little half-crazed stage-hand who shot her.

He had fallen in love with her and, like the men in the Kansas

town from which she came, had written her several silly notes of which she said nothing to Wilson. The letters weren't very nice and some of them, the most unpleasant ones, were by some twist of the fellow's mind signed with Wilson's name. Two of them were afterwards found on her person and were brought in as evidence against Wilson during his trial.

And so the woman worked in the theatre, and the summer had passed; and on an evening in the fall there was to be a dress rehearsal at the theatre and the woman went there, taking Wilson with her. It was a fall day such as we sometimes have in Chicago, cold and wet and with a heavy fog lying over the city.

The dress rehearsal did not come off. The star was ill, or something of the sort happened; and Wilson and his woman sat about in the cold empty theatre for an hour or two and then the woman was told she could go for the night.

She and Wilson walked across the city, stopping to get something to eat at a small restaurant. He was in one of the abstract silent moods common to him. No doubt he was thinking of the things he wanted to express in the poetry I have tried to tell you about. He went along, not seeing the woman beside him, not seeing the people drifting up to them and passing them in the streets. He went along in that way and she—

She was no doubt then as she always was in his presence—silent and satisfied with the fact that she was with him. There was nothing he could think or feel that did not take her into account. The very blood flowing up through his body was her blood too. He had made her feel that and she was silent and satisfied as he went along, his body walking beside her, but his fancy groping its way through the land of high walls and deep wells.

They had walked from the restaurant, in the Loop district, over a bridge to the North Side, and still no words passed between them.

When they had almost reached their own place the stage-hand, the small man with the nervous hands who had written the notes, appeared out of the fog, as though out of nowhere, and shot the woman.

That was all there was to it. It was as simple as that.

They were walking, as I have described them, when a head flashed up before the woman in the midst of the fog, a hand shot out, there was the quick abrupt sound of a pistol shot, and then the

absurd little stage-hand, he with the wrinkled impotent little old woman's face, then he turned and ran away.

All that happened, just as I have written it and it made no impression at all on the mind of Wilson. He walked along as though nothing had happened; and the woman, after half falling, gathered herself together and managed to continue walking beside him, still saying nothing.

They went thus for perhaps two blocks, and had reached the foot of the outer stairs that led up to their place when a policeman came running, and the woman told him a lie. She told him some story about a struggle between two drunken men and after a moment of talk the policeman went away, sent away by the woman in a direction opposite to the one taken by the fleeing stage-hand.

They were in the darkness and the fog now, and the woman took her man's arm while they climbed the stairs. He was as yet, as far as I will ever be able to explain logically, unaware of the shot and of the fact that she was dying although he had seen and heard everything. What the doctors said, who were put on the case afterwards, was that a cord or muscle or something of the sort that controls the action of the heart, that it had been practically severed by the shot.

She was dead and alive at the same time, I suppose.

Anyway the two people marched up the stairs and into the room above and then a really dramatic and lovely thing happened. One wishes that the scene with just all its connotations could be played out on a stage instead of having to be put down in words.

The two came into the room, the one dead, but not ready to acknowledge death without a flash of something individual and lovely, that is to say the one dead while still alive and the other alive, but at the moment dead to what was going on.

The room into which they went was dark, but with the sure instinct of an animal the woman walked across the room to the fireplace while the man stopped and stood some ten feet from the door, thinking and thinking in his peculiarly abstract way. The fireplace was filled with an accumulation of waste matter, cigarette ends—the man was a hard smoker—bits of paper on which he had scribbled—the rubbishy accumulation that gathers about all such fellows as Wilson. There was all of this quickly combustible material stuffed into the fireplace on this first cool evening of the fall.

And so the woman went to it and found a match somewhere in the darkness and touched the pile off.

There is a picture that will remain with me always. Just that—the barren room and the blind unseeing man standing there, and the woman kneeling and making a little flare of beauty at the last. Little flames leaped up. Lights crept and danced over the walls. Below, on the floor of the room, there was a deep well of darkness in which the man, blind with his own purpose, was standing.

The pile of burning papers must have made for a moment quite a glare of light in the room, and the woman stood for a moment, beside the fireplace, just outside the glare of light.

And then, pale and wavering, she walked across it as across a lighted stage, going softly and silently toward him. Had she also something to say? No one will ever know. What happened was that she said nothing.

She walked across to him, and at the moment she reached him fell down on the floor and died at his feet, and at the same moment the little fire of papers died. If she struggled before she died, there on the floor, she struggled in silence. There was no sound. She had fallen and lay between him and the door that led out to the stairway and to the street.

It was then Wilson became altogether inhuman—too much so for my understanding.

The fire had died and the woman he had loved had died.

And there he stood looking into nothingness, thinking, God knows, perhaps of nothingness.

He stood a minute, five minutes, perhaps ten. He was a man who, before he found the woman, had been sunk far down into a deep sea of doubt and questioning. Before he found the woman no expression had ever come from him. He had perhaps just wandered from place to place, looking at people's faces, wondering about people, wanting to come close to others, and not knowing how. The woman had been able to lift him up to the surface of the sea of life for a time, and with her he had floated on the surface of the sea, under the sky, in the sunlight. The woman's warm body, given to him in love, had been as a boat in which he had floated on the surface of the sea, and now the boat had wrecked and he was sinking again, back into the sea.

All of this had happened and he did not know—that is to say he did not know and at the same time he did know.

He was a poet I presume and perhaps at that moment a new poem was forming itself in his mind.

At any rate he stood for a time, as I have said, and then he must have had a feeling that he should make some move, that he should if possible save himself from some disaster about to overtake him.

He had an impulse to go to the door and by way of the stairway to go down stairs and into the street, but the body of the woman was between him and the door.

What he did and what, when he later told of it, sounded so terribly cruel to others was to treat the woman's dead body as one might treat a fallen tree in the darkness in a forest. First he tried to push the body aside with his foot and then, as that seemed impossible, he stepped awkwardly over it.

He stepped directly on the woman's arm. The discoloured mark where his heel landed was afterwards found on the body.

He almost fell and then his body righted itself and he went walking, marched down the rickety stairs and went walking in the streets.

By chance the night had cleared. It had grown colder and a cold wind had driven the fog away. He walked along very nonchalantly for several blocks. He walked along as calmly as you, the reader, might walk after having had lunch with a friend.

As a matter of fact he even stopped to make a purchase at a store. I remember that the place was called The Whip. He went in, bought himself a package of cigarettes, lighted one, and stood a moment apparently listening to a conversation going on among several idlers in the place.

And then he strolled again, going along smoking the cigarette and thinking of his poem no doubt. Then he came to a moving-picture theatre.

That perhaps touched him off. He also was an old fireplace, stuffed with old thoughts, scraps of unwritten poems, God knows what rubbish. Often he had gone at night to the theatre, where the woman was employed, to walk home with her; and now the people were coming out of a small moving-picture house. They had been in there seeing a play called *The Light of the World*.

Wilson walked into the midst of the crowd, lost himself in the

crowd, smoking his cigarette, and then he took off his hat, looked anxiously about for a moment, and suddenly began shouting in a loud voice.

He stood there, shouting and trying to tell the story of what had happened in a loud voice and with the uncertain air of one trying to remember a dream. He did that for a moment and then after running a little way along the pavement stopped and began his story again. It was only after he had gone thus, in short rushes, back along the street to the house and up the rickety stairway to where the woman was lying—the crowd following curiously at his heels—that a policeman came up and arrested him.

He seemed excited at first, but was quiet afterwards; and he laughed at the notion of insanity when the lawyer who had been retained for him tried to set up the plea in court.

As I have said, his action during his trial was confusing to us all, as he seemed wholly uninterested in the murder and in his own fate. After the confession of the man who had fired the shot he seemed to feel no resentment toward him either. There was something he wanted, having nothing to do with what had happened.

There he had been, you see, before he found the woman, wandering about in the world, digging himself deeper and deeper into the deep wells he talked about in his poetry, building the wall between himself and all us others constantly higher and higher.

He knew what he was doing, but he could not stop. That's what he kept talking about, pleading with people about. The man had come up out of the sea of doubt, had grasped for a time the hand of the woman, and with her hand in his had floated for a time upon the surface of life, but now he felt himself again sinking down into the sea.

His talking and talking, stopping people in the street and talking, going into people's houses and talking, was I presume but an effort he was always afterwards making not to sink back for ever into the sea; it was the struggle of a drowning man I dare say.

At any rate I have told you the man's story, have been compelled to try to tell you his story. There was a kind of power in him, and the power has been exerted over me as it was exerted over the woman from Kansas and the unknown hunchback girl kneeling on the floor in the dust and peering through a keyhole.

Ever since the woman died we have all been trying and trying to drag the man Wilson back up out of the sea of doubt and dumbness into which we feel him sinking deeper and deeper, and to no avail.

And I have only told you his story in the hopes that among you, the readers, there may be one who, like the woman from Kansas, will know what we others do not know; that is to say that you will know how to put an arm down into the sea and that you will have the strength to drag the man Wilson back to the surface again.

NAMED FLAMINGO

BY GLENWAY WESCOTT

He stands
on a jointed stick;
his neck, the snake of snow
black-mouthed,
coiled on the almond-
shaped body
thatched with plumes.

First the yellow
rays break (Cézanne said)
leaving blue
for outline, as of his foot,
a flawless bone,
fixed in the unhorned water.

Hard bird, he prefers
with his eye
the oiled silk leaves,
the dome, and clouds like fur

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Courtesy of M Paul Guillaume

NEGRO SCULPTURE (PAHOUI)



Courtesy of M Paul Guillaume

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MATTHEW PRIOR

BY LLEWELYN POWYS

MATTHEW PRIOR was undoubtedly one of the principal precursors of the Augustan age of English poetry; however, born as he was in 1664, his lighter verses are redeemed somewhat from the tedious classical anaesthesia that we associate with the eighteenth century by the fact that they still carry with them a suggestion of the delightful sophisticated levity which belonged to the Caroline epoch.

Matthew Prior, so we are assured by Dr Johnson, was "one of those that have burst out from an obscure original to great eminence." Whether or not the ancient county of Dorset is justified in claiming Wimborne Minster as the place of his actual birth, it is clear that it was from the immediate vicinity of that old-world country town that his progenitors sprang. Indeed it is within the memory of our own generation that the last of the family, Martha Prior, daughter of a simple shepherd, died at Godmanston.

The first authentic glimpse we get of the young poet is as a wine carrier in his uncle's tavern in London. It was here that Lord Dorset discovered him, Horace in hand, and with that generous munificence, so characteristic of the restoration, paid for his schooling at Westminster and later for his entrance to St John's College, Cambridge. Matthew Prior it is quite evident made the best of his opportunities. He had a good "sense of direction," if we may be permitted to use that invidious modern phrase, and cultivated with the utmost zeal useful friendships. In London during the vacations he sought the company of the wits and was one of those who frequented Wills' Coffee-House and who during the long drawn-out evenings of the late summer would sit on the balcony of that famous resort "proud to dip a finger and thumb into Mr Dryden's snuff-box." This privilege, however, in no way prevented him from cleverly parodying in his *City Mouse* and *Country Mouse* the famous pro-Catholic poem of the Poet Laureate. It was, in fact, upon this undergraduate exercise that his future career was founded. He became secretary to the Ambassador at the Hague and, be-

cause of a series of chances, remained for several years as England's chief representative "at this central cogwheel of the cumbrous engine" of the Coalition.

From a pecuniary point of view the berth was not as satisfactory as it might have been, and Prior's letters from now on are filled with fretful references to the inadequacy of the Government's payment of twenty shillings a day with an allowance for "reasonable extraordinaries." He was never tired of deploring the fact that his creditors, as he put it, "were brisker in business than the Treasury." "Who has ever heard," he exclaimed, "of a professed panegyric poet that was able to advance two guineas to the public?" In vain he pointed out to the preoccupied authorities at home "that a little house, this winter, would be convenient in so cold a country as Holland." His agitated pleas were greeted with evasions and procrastinations and the poet-diplomatist was left "to scramble at ordinaries with Switzers or French Protestants." One of his own poems suggests, however, that his time was not entirely occupied with his ambassadorial duties. He too had, we may assume, as well as another, his margins, his moments, his golden week-ends when it mattered not a rush to him whether or no the "disaffected" reached the shores of England.

"In a little Dutch-chaise on a Saturday night
On my left hand my Horace, a Nymph on my right."

As the years passed his financial straits were considerably relieved by a sinecure secretaryship in Dublin, from which he drew for several years, though never setting foot in the Island, remuneration to the tune of nearly £1000 a year.

From the Hague he was eventually transferred to Paris. His letters from that capital are full of entertaining gossiping information. He was shown over the royal palace and as he viewed Le Brun's gorgeous pictures representing the victories of Louis XIV was asked whether Hampton Court could be said to rival such a display. "The monuments of my master's actions" he replied appropriately enough, "are to be seen everywhere but in his own house." He visited the court of the exiled King of England and though the account he gives of that fallen monarch was not exactly in the best of taste it has its own interest: "I faced old James the other day at

St Cloud. Vive Guillaume! You never saw such a strange figure as the old bully is, lean, worn and riv'led."

On his return to England he abandons his friends the Whigs and turns Tory, actually for a short time gaining a seat in the House of Commons, for which act of treachery, on the death of Queen Anne and the return of the opposition, he is held in custody for two years and is, so he fancies, in no small danger of losing his life.

But even so he is still full of resource. He conceives the fortunate idea of issuing a "tall folio" of his poems done on "paper imperial and the largest in England." He manages to interest innumerable people in his project: Jonathan Swift even exerts himself and extracts not less than £200 from what he called the "hedge country" of his residence. The volumes are sold for two guineas each and Matthew Prior is soon rewarded by having four thousand pounds in his fob and this with an equal sum which he owed to the generosity of Lord Oxford and with the money due to him from his fellowship at John's ensures the poet "his bread and butter at the last." And yet when one looks over this famous collection of poems how few of them seem to us at this later date worthy of preservation. How weary one grows of his Cupids and Chloes and how truly gross and artificial so many of his poems appear! Their only redeeming quality lies, it would seem, in a certain airy amorousness which sometimes, but by no means always, carries with it a happy distinctive tone derived, we may perhaps be justified in surmising, from those wanton digressions in his private life which were to be afterwards so deplored by Samuel Johnson. For there can be small doubt that this "ambassador of meane extraction" as Queen Anne used to call him, this "creature" of Dorset's, was extremely addicted to the pursuit of the not altogether intangible delights which come to those who indulge in what the Elizabethans were wont to name as the pastime of "wenching."

Mat Prior was in fact a most incorrigible amorist. He would spend an evening with Oxford, Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift and then go off gay and incontinent to this or that little midnight drab.

"Fair Thames she haunts, and every neighbouring grove
Sacred to soft recess, and gentle love."

"So when I am wearied with wandering all day

To thee, my delight, in the evening I come:
 No matter what beauties I saw in my way;
 They were but my visits, but thou art my home."

However much one may regret in his poems the presence of a certain note of hard artificial and insensitive cynicism, one cannot but accede that he is able in his own facile way better almost than any other English poet to indicate the unwisdom of putting too high a value upon the ungenerous temptation of inordinate chastity. The iniquity of thus capriciously damming up one of the main streams of human happiness seems to have lodged itself very firmly in this Dorset man's brain. And he was at pains to whisper his perilous convictions into the pretty conch-like ears of every young girl he had to do with.

"Never fancy time's before you,
 Youth, believe me, will away;
 Then alas! who will adore you
 Or to wrinkles tribute pay.

All the swains on you attending
 Show how much your charms deserve;
 But, miser-like, for fear of spending,
 You amidst your plenty starve.

While a thousand freer lasses,
 Who their youth and charms employ,
 Though your beauty theirs surpasses,
 Live in far more perfect Joy."

His frolic philosophy shows scant respect even towards the state of Holy Matrimony. It would seem that his profligate mind could find an excuse to justify the most reprehensible indulgence. His reasoning on this head cannot but be painful reading for married ears! What home would be safe if punishment were made to fit the crime at this rate?

"Since we your husband daily see
 So jealous out of season

Phyllis, let you and I agree
To make him so with reason."

But it would be a mistake to think that Matthew Prior was altogether incapable of writing in a more moral vein. His book of poems ends with the epitaph he composed for the tomb of Sir Thomas Powys.

"Here lies Sir Thomas Powys Knight. . . .

What by example he taught throughout his life
At his death he recommended to his family and friends:
'To fear God, and live uprightly'
Let who ever reads this stone
Be wise, and be instructed."

It is, however, unlikely that the author of the inscription, gave, if the truth were known, very much attention to this death-bed exhortation, any more, with shame be it spoken, than does up to the present time the author of this Essay—the humblest and least punctilious of the large and graceless brood which owes its existence to the pious and potent loins of the Knight of Lilford Hall.

"To the grave with the dead
And the living to the bread."

With the money he derived from his book and with the gift of the house in Essex that he had from Lord Oxford, Matthew Prior proposed to spend the last years of his life happily enough. He had grown a little deaf for no other reason, as he explained, than that "he had not thought of taking care of his ears, while not sure of his head." But apparently this slight physical handicap in no way interfered with his relish for life. We hear of him planting quincunxes in the garden of his manor, or spending long happy months at Wimple, Oxford's country seat, delighted as much by the grace of the little Lady Margaret as he had before been by the manners "wild as colt untam'd" of the high-spirited Kitty, afterwards to become the famous Duchess of Queensbury whom Beau Nash is said to have treated so roughly and who living to the lat-

ter end of the eighteenth century died, at last, characteristically enough, from a surfeit of cherries!

It was at Wimple that Matthew Prior himself ended his life on September 18, 1721. His will was found to contain a legacy to a woman whom Dr Johnson does not hesitate to describe as "a despicable drab of the lowest species."

In a letter written at the time we read:

"I find poor Prior's will makes noise in town much to his disadvantage. Some malicious fellows have had the curiosity to go and inquire of the ale-house woman what sort of conversation Prior had with her. The ungrateful strumpet is very free of telling it and gives such accounts as afford much diversion."

Also from Arbuthnot we get a suggestive glimpse of this side of the poet's life, which was, after all, so singularly removed from the stately quincunxes, round which on August evenings "My noble, lovely little Peggy" was wont to play and trip it. "We are to have a bowl of punch at Bessy Cox's. She would fain have put it upon Lewis that she was his Emma; she owned Flanders Jane was his Chloe."

Matthew Prior had long had Westminster Abbey "in his eye" and in the end he indulged "a last piece of human vanity" by bequeathing five hundred pounds towards the erection of the preposterous monument which now stands above his grave.

The actual place of his burial is at the feet of Edmund Spenser in the poet's corner.

It must be confessed there appears something curiously incongruous about a trick of fortune which could cause the wanton paramour of Mistress Besse Cox to lie down in the dust, head to heel, with none other than the fastidious author of the *Faerie Queene*.

VIENNA LETTER

August, 1923

IN this letter to the readers of *THE DIAL* I should prefer not to discuss cultural and artistic matters in Austria, but to take another point of view, and from this look out over another and a broader mental surface. But this point of view will always remain that of an Austrian, that is, of an individual who shares the language and the intellectual concerns common to the German, without belonging to that great political entity which was established in 1871 and humbled in the world war: the German Empire. Perhaps it is well to remind American readers, who are accustomed to dealing with large, simple, and plainly demarcated political and economic units, that in Europe there are many millions of Germans outside the German Empire who take an active part in their nation's essential and ultimate destiny—by which I do not mean its political destiny. There are the German Swiss—and in numbers they constitute the strongest part of the Swiss Confederation—the Austrians, and the millions of Germans who are incorporated in the Czecho-Slovak state, not to speak of the smaller and yet very considerable minorities which are to be found in the other countries of eastern Europe, and even in France.

Now it might seem that it would not be worth the trouble to bother American heads with the complications and intimate details of Europe; especially if one is not a politician, and the American interested in such things would less likely turn to *THE DIAL* than to the distinguished review which was founded a year ago with the purpose of propagating knowledge of foreign politics in the United States under the guiding spirit, if I am not mistaken, of Professor Coolidge of Boston. But in this old and complicated Europe, intellectual, historical, and political matters have the strictest and the most indissoluble connexion with one another. And this bewildering but essentially quite consistent interplay gives rise to that mystery which, if I were to turn a meteorological phenomenon into a spiritual one, I should call the pan-European weather; and exactly as with the weather, it has its maximum and its minimum tempera-

tures, its rains and calms, its darkneses and stagnations, while the storms and cloudbursts are the European wars and revolutions. But I fear that Americans must be forced to take an interest in this weather, since somehow there will begin to be, not a European and an American weather, each independent of the other, but one general condition spreading over the whole planet. And I fear that to understand this meteorology they must learn to read more and more in the heavy tome of our (the European) intellectual life. Now to be sure, this book contains an unending amount of things which touch on the past; in fact, in the pages of this book the past and the present seem almost inseparable—a disturbing factor for the American attitude, which is based entirely on the present and derives so much momentary strength from this position. But nevertheless I fear that the American—I mean the American who wants in some way to lay his hand on the hilt of present and future intellectual forces—cannot avoid puzzling over this old and heavy book. And his incentive will not be in the lukewarm pious deference which he owes to the intellectual situation in Europe because it has always lain behind his own experiences as a historical past, an hypothesis; but a much stronger and more feverish motive will impel him. In some day not far off, with the keenness of a besetting fever, with the poignancy of a dream, and the oppression of a nightmare, he will become conscious that all these European matters are by no means things of an unrelated past, but the living and fermenting present, a ferment in which so tremendously much of the past is a factor. He will see that this European present is also his American future, from which there is so little chance of his withdrawing himself or withdrawing his great young sea-encircled continent; that, rather, all the potentialities and catastrophes of geographic and racial destiny which are slumbering in this young continent will be released through no other conflagrations than that of Europe's intellectual future. We are now facing such an effect of the intellectual undercurrent of Europe upon the intellectual undercurrent of America. (I speak of processes which are worked out on a quite different plane from the relatively harmless economic crises and the almost stupid and inane vicissitudes of current politics.) The symptoms are manifesting themselves here and there, but to be sure they make a tremendously innocent and, in comparison with such great matters of the world's future, an almost trivial showing. I mean the gradual penetration of American imaginative life by the strong,

subtle dream-toxins of the European imagination—a process whereby New York, the capital of the world (as it has now become in a certain sense owing to the war) has begun magically to attract all those individuals who are the carriers, in any sphere, of Europe's artistic and intellectual life. It makes no difference to me whether these individuals are called Bergson or France, or Chaliapine, Reinhardt, or Stanislawsky, or Anna Pavlowa, Elly Ney, or Maria Jeritza; or whether these results deriving from Europe are obtained through the subtleties of words and sentences with their spiritual import, through the soaring of a voice, the tones of an instrument, or the movements by which an inspired human body can display the incomprehensible. Also I completely and intentionally neglect the somewhat external and superficial forms in which this re-absorption seems to be taking place, and the primarily pleasure-seeking spirit behind the classes of the public who are the receivers of these influences. But no one who looks into such things can avoid the analogy between this situation and the situation which began with the last century of the Roman Republic and determined the nature of the centuries following—an analogy of course which, like any other, cannot be followed through too strictly. I refer to the invasion of the young Roman metropolis by the *gracculus histrio*, the Greek sophist, the Greek artist, the Greek dancer. With them enter Plato and his dreams, Egypt and its secrets, Persia, Babylon, Syria, Zoroaster, Mithras, and finally the gospel. The superficies of this society over which the invasion first spread, were, to be sure, only the rich classes, the pleasure-seekers, the sophisticated, and the curious. But the spirit is the subtlest of all poisons; inside of a century Rome was hollowed out, and in place of a relatively young and naïve, half-peasant civilization, it housed the mightiest and most portentous mixture of minds and religions that the world has ever seen. For such an intellectual infusion swiftly penetrates the blood vessels and the lymphatic chambers, and I believe that the United States, in the obscure depths of its becoming, conceals all those elements which are predestined, in making a contact with such enormous ferment as is contained in the intellectual life of Europe, to take on quite astonishing new extensions—especially of a religious nature, perhaps also artistic.

With this, by way of preliminary remarks, I shall try to outline in very rough strokes the inner aspect of spiritual Germany after the catastrophe of the war and of the peace which is continuing the

war, and above all, the mentality and the attitude of the youth who are fully concerned in such crises. These young men do not see in the war any single sharply outlined historical event, but they look upon it as the climax of material and intellectual developments during the five or six preceding decades, or even the summing up, the symbolic and, one might say, the picturesque accomplishment of the whole nineteenth century. Their attitude after such a catastrophe is in every way entirely different from that of the young Russian men and women when they saw themselves in a similar situation after the collapse of the first Russian attempt at revolution in the years 1906-7. Among the young Russians at that time, there followed after a short but very acute exertion—for that revolution was a liberal one, carried on by the highest intellectual classes, and it was finally stifled by czarism with the help of the lower classes, the same people who are now Bolshevik—after a short period of activity, I say, there followed a complete relaxation of the nerves and of the will, a sinking back into melancholic apathy or into sensuality. In some of his novels which have obtained a passing fame, Artzibashev has described these circumstances. If I had to sum up in a word the effect of the great catastrophe of 1918 on the younger Germans, it would be the exact counter-concept of relaxation: namely, the most intense exertion, an exertion of a political nature, to a great extent—but I should like to omit here entirely the purely political. Exertion, then, of the mind, exertion of all mental exertions, exertion of the feeling of responsibility, and exertion of the consciousness, and of the sense of fate and the cosmos.

This young generation finds itself on the ruins of a world; not only the political world is a heap of ruins to them, but also the world of the intellect. The rationalism in which the nineteenth century thought that its world-outlook was organized indestructibly for all times, has collapsed. The first great act of the young generation was to dethrone rationalism, and subordinate it to the irrational. They abandoned the conceptions which the nineteenth century respected most: the conception of complete individual freedom, and the conception of evolution by which all the mysteries of existence have been more obscured than clarified. The conception of authority rose higher and purer, when all the actual bearers of authority had fallen. The effort was made as profoundly as possible to give the strongest possible foundation to the conception of authority in feeling and thinking (for when we are young we strive

especially for a synthesis between feeling and thinking). All the misfortune which had been suffered, the tragic incomprehensibilities of the historic process to which one is subject, the awareness of their own shortcomings—all this was put into the corner-stone of the new belief. They tried to grasp the conception of fate as fully as possible. Incited and consolidated by the urge to arrive at new combinations of all things and to see something like order and sense in a dual—political and spiritual—catastrophe, they devoted themselves to two streams of thought and feeling. One is more Christian or mystic: the fusion of all things in a recognition of God which soars, so to speak, above and beyond the rational. The other is more ancient, or rather, oriental and pagan; starting from a magnificent comprehension of the material life, it arrives at the conception of life's flow, and likewise moves in a dark bed beneath the rational. But it is not as though each of these tendencies had precluded the other. Rather, they merged together, just as two tendencies had done almost two thousand years before, when a paganism striving after spirituality and a Judaic Christianity inclining towards a pagan outlook had really gone over into each other—and with tremendous results. This neither purely spiritual nor purely vitalistic attitude—which can no longer be reached by the categories of optimism or pessimism prevailing in the nineteenth century, because it operates, figuratively, on an entirely new plane—holds in thrall the minds of men who can be considered as forming one generation, and who will determine by their pressure all intellectual developments. It would be idle and trivial to desire to ascertain the numerical ratio between these individuals and the totality of available young men; yet I believe that there is a great body of these people who are filled with a religiosity which is not dogmatized, but living and pulsating, that they have swept through all classes of the nation, and are banding together in small conventicles everywhere throughout the German-speaking countries. This might be called a condition of pre-messianic religiosity. And it has even conjured up for itself a leader, or forerunner of the leader: not in the form of a human being of flesh and blood, but in the form of a dead man, a single deceased individual who had been forgotten by the nation for nearly a hundred years, but whose spiritual presence and power seems so great and unusual to the present generation rallying about him that we should rather speak of it as a religious phenomenon than a purely literary one. This man who was reborn,

called back from the grave by the pressure of a whole generation, is the poet Friedrich Hölderlin. It must seem strange to people who are powerfully enmeshed in the notion of the immediate present to think that a generation of living men allows its highest thoughts to circulate about the figure of a youth who was born about a hundred and fifty years ago (1771) and vanished from this world about 1803 or 1804; not through death, but through an almost fated madness, under the cloud of which he lived on until after the year 1840. Thus, approximately, a contemporary of Shelley, evoked by the faith and will of a whole generation to serve as the symbol of a leader in one of the most sinister conditions in all history. And yet I am speaking of things which are utterly real, in any case possessing much more reality in thousands of heads than all that is going on between ministers and ministers, party leaders and party leaders, and which is filling up the ephemeral columns of the newspapers; things also which have quite external and tangible effects, in that throughout the German world one edition after another of the works of this poet who was almost forgotten during his lifetime and fifty years ago was hardly known by name, is being issued and eagerly consumed by the public. It is not easy to tell foreigners what it is that can take a long-dead lyric poet—whose hymns and elegies are of a wonderful rhythmic strength, but at the same time are linguistically very difficult and in places truly obscure—and with a single stroke make him the leader of a whole fated generation, so that they recover themselves in him after a stupor of several years, and begin building the greatest structures in accordance with him. So I must content myself with a few mere pointers. But it is remarkable enough to think that in particular the strophes of his last productive years when he was already in the shadow of madness, strophes which passed for decades as completely incomprehensible or even as simply the senseless products of a maniac, are now really understood, not only by scattered individuals, but by many; and an unending content pours from these sibylline pages into their hearts, while this content is such that it seems to be precisely the one possible solace for the present hour and situation. He is especially fitted as the leader and the symbol of a tragic hour for this reason: he was a tragic figure, and besides, of remarkable purity, misunderstood, even completely disdained by the world of his contemporaries, beaten by fate in every way, entirely alone and therefore remaining entirely good, indeed—like the noble harp—

answering every stroke with always purer and higher tones. But this declares only the pathetic element radiating from his figure, and not the intellectual. But quite aside from everything which makes him a touching, poetic figure, or a mystical one if you will, he possessed great intellectual potency. Driven by a relentless but genuinely German destiny to retire within himself, he made himself a world from within. Yet it was not at all—as with the romantics living after him—a world of the fleeting and music-like dream; it was a world of crystalline vision in which all the spiritual, moral, and historical forces of reality had their place, although not viewed coldly through the understanding, but with a mythopoeic or religious eye. The more pitilessly and confusingly the real world encircled him, the more powerfully his soul struggled to construct within itself a vision embracing all the forces in the world and reconciling them with one another. As I try to describe for Anglo-American readers of *THE DIAL* the aspect of this mighty supernatural presence, the name of William Blake comes spontaneously to my mind; and in fact an analogy does exist for those who look more closely at the phenomena of the spirit. In any case, abandoning himself to a pure and demoniacally powerful intuition, Hölderlin perfected within himself a synthesis of the great historical past on which our intellectual existence rests; and in this synthesis he produced the solemn union of the two great tendencies which I designated above as the religious complexes in the consciousness of this last living generation. He grasped Hellenism with his whole soul; but precisely because he grasped it completely and lived in it, towards the end of his life he also moved through an evolution which transpired in Hellenism itself—if we see, glimmering through Plato, a light which is identical with that of Christianity. He grasped this youthful and still undogmatized spirit of Christianity without, one might say, completely abandoning the spirit of Hellenism. The great pagan conceptions of fate and the gods live in his poetic world along with deeply Christian attitudes and intuitions—Aether and Bacchus with Christ. So the generation of the living sees its deepest yearning, the germ of its new religious dream, pre-existing in this mystic leader. His star shines over their spiritual world; and for the moment, as the stars will it, this figure is nearer to the heart and affects the heart more powerfully, than even the powerful and ever comforting vision of Goethe.

BOOK REVIEWS

A NEW SYSTEM OF PHILOSOPHY

SCEPTICISM AND ANIMAL FAITH. Introduction to a System of Philosophy. By George Santayana. 8vo. 314 pages. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$3.50.

THIS volume is only a prelude to a work on Realms of Being, which will deal with the different spheres of Existence, Essence, Truth, and Spirit. It is a brave thing in these days, to launch a system of philosophy; there is everywhere so much detail, so much bored familiarity, that few men have the comprehensiveness for a large synthesis. Mr Santayana has the power of dismissing the irrelevant: "exact science and the books of the learned," he says, "are not necessary to establish my essential doctrine. . . . It needs, to prove it, only the stars, the seasons, the swarm of animals, the spectacle of birth and death, of cities and wars." He claims, accordingly, that his philosophy is not merely an expression of the intellectual fashion of the moment.

"In the past or in the future, my language and my borrowed knowledge would have been different, but under whatever sky I had been born, since it is the same sky, I should have had the same philosophy."

This is more nearly true in his case than in that of any other living European, but it is not quite true—probably it is not meant to be quite true. It is true that the speculations of the last two centuries leave him cold. Philosophy in modern times, he says:

"ceased to be the art of thinking and tried to become that impossible thing, the science of thought. . . . The whole of British and German philosophy is only literature. . . . Not one term, not one conclusion in it has the least scientific value, and it is only when this philosophy is good literature that it is good for anything."

He might therefore have had the same philosophy if he had lived before Kant and Hume. But we cannot say as much of the three men whom he really admires: Plato, Aristotle, and Spinoza. Plato, especially, is woven into the very texture of his thought. I do not know what his outlook would have been if he had been a contemporary of Heraclitus, but it would not have been the outlook which in fact he has.

So much for the past. As for the future, will it be "the same sky"? In Mr Wells' *When the Sleeper Awakes*, London has a roof, it eschews daylight, and has only electric lamps; the Londoner never sees the stars, or even the sun and moon; he knows nothing of "the sweet approach of even or morn." Such a man would not have Mr Santayana's philosophy, or any other that is proved by "the stars, the seasons, the swarm of animals." Yet future man will presumably be such, unless industrialism destroys itself.

Mr Santayana's system, therefore, though not bound to the present moment or to any one Western country, belongs to the Hellenic tradition created by Plato and in process of destruction by modern science; it belongs to about two thousand years of Western Europe, and could not have been produced (short of a miracle) in another age or continent. Of course, I include America in Western Europe for this purpose.

Mr Santayana holds—and in this I agree with him—that all our beliefs are matters of faith rather than reason. Applying the method of Cartesian doubt, he finds no reason to stop short at the ego, or any other existing thing; he arrives at last at "essence," which he holds to be indubitable but non-existent. The essence of a thing, in his system, is its character, apart from the fact that it exists; there are innumerable essences which do not belong to any existing thing, such as "golden mountain," "phoenix," "unicorn." There is no room for scepticism here; so he contends, because essence is free, not wedged tight among rivals, like the things that exist. But a philosophy which wholly ignores the existing world is somewhat unsatisfactory; moreover, like Hume's doubts, it must be abandoned when the philosopher leaves his study.

"Scepticism is the chastity of the intellect, and it is shameful to surrender it too soon or to the first comer: there is nobility in preserving it coolly and proudly through a long youth, until at last, in

the ripeness of instinct and discretion, it can be safely exchanged for fidelity and happiness."

It is "animal faith" that prompts this exchange. By "animal faith" is meant something that we share with other animals: the belief of the cat in the mouse, and of the mouse in the cat; the habit of taking our fleeting perceptions as signs of "things," and generally those fundamental beliefs without which daily life is impossible. Animal faith can be purified and systematized by philosophy, but cannot be abolished except on pain of death. Accordingly, it is to be frankly accepted where it is indispensable.

"I propose now to consider what objects animal faith requires me to posit, and in what order; without for a moment forgetting that my assurance of their existence is only instinctive, and my description of their nature only symbolic."

The remainder of the book reports the deliverance of such animal faith as has survived in Mr Santayana.

There are three points in the system which fail to make themselves luminous to the present reviewer. The first is the treatment of essence as something divorced from existence and independent of it. The second is the belief in "substance." The third is the discernment of "spirit" as a separate realm of being. This last raises such thorny problems that it will have to be left on one side. The other two, however, can be briefly considered.

The distinction between essence and existence is one which, apart from terminology, is familiar to common sense. Hamlet is merely an essence; Julius Caesar has an essence, but was also an existing being. For this reason Hamlet was whatever Shakespeare chose that he should be; whereas Julius Caesar was what he was, and not whatever the historians chose to invent. We can abstract his essence by describing him, and leave it doubtful whether he existed, just as it is doubtful whether King Arthur existed. When we do this we are freed from the trammels of historical fact. It is doubtful, however, whether this is a logically correct account of what occurs. Let us take some simpler essence—say, a certain shade of colour. Wherever this shade of colour exists, it seems to be the essence itself that exists. All that we do when we call it an "essence"

is to ignore its relations in space and time; it is the fact of having such relations that seems to be meant when anything is said to "exist." (This, at least, is one meaning of this very ambiguous word.) It may be suggested that all simple essences do actually exist, in the sense in which a shade of colour exists wherever there is a patch having that colour. As for complex essences, they will not be substantives, but a collection of propositions—true in the case of Caesar, false in the case of Hamlet. They become false through the prelude "once upon a time," which has to be supposed in every tale if no more definite time is indicated. It would take us too far into technical logic to elaborate this suggestion. But the question is vital to Mr Santayana; perhaps it is a case where his dismissal of "exact science" has its dangers.

The same may be said of "substance," which apparently means, in this book, much the same as what is ordinarily meant by "matter." Some acknowledgement is made that this notion is now often regarded as questionable, but arguments are advanced to show that nevertheless substance is unavoidable.

"If Heraclitus and modern physics are right in telling us that the most stable of the Pyramids is but a mass of events, this truth about substance does not dissolve substance into events that happen nowhere and to nothing. . . . If an event is to have individual identity and a place amongst other events, it must be a change which substance undergoes in one of its parts."

Again, we are told that events must be "things in flux" or "modes of substance." One is reminded of a famous argument of Kant in favour of substance. But when Mr Santayana speaks of those he is criticising as assuming events that happen "nowhere and to nothing," the word "nowhere" is unwarranted, and the words "to nothing" assume doctrines in logic and physics which demand a more elaborate justification than is to be found in this volume.

The book has all Mr Santayana's well-known merits: beauty of style, a truly philosophic temper, a wide survey of history and thought. It is full of sayings that are profound, delightful, or amusing. And it has the great merit of not pretending, by bad arguments, to establish doctrines which we accept on instinct, but cannot hope to prove.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

THE FIRST BOOK OF MARY BUTTS

SPEED THE PLOUGH, and Other Stories. *By Mary Butts.* 12mo. 222 pages. Chapman and Hall, Ltd. London.

MISS BUTTS' collection of stories can be likened only to master-work: Dubliners or Mr Lawrence's *England My England*. It is the announcement of a new intellect, acute and passionate, to scrutinize experience with an unfamiliar penetration and to substitute for it, as it ceases, new form and light.

The light is tragic. Funereal mother, she hurries her exact heart-breaking figures into rigid graves or silence; without explanation or complaint; in a bare parti-coloured light, "all the epiphany you've got for the fine clothes, and the fine movements, and the sensual elegance, and the silly imagination, and the pain." What is done, is still; the memory can make these events a part of itself, but cannot turn them into theory or proposal. The result in sorrow and sweetness is great; halted by an aesthetic intuition at the exact point where it would become sensational.

English to the core, her good is serenity. Something over and above the *décor* of passion and inquisition of pain, like a David and Jonathan pact, is its nearest equivalent in conduct. The elaborate genius of her race enchants or bewilders a foreign mind: of two common labourers, "They were pleased that they recognized without philanthropy, or commiseration their contrasted pride and grace." Beyond that, there is no "impulse of malice, indignation, despair," and little comparative appraisal.

Therefore, the tales are sinister when not idyllic. No emphases are made for the benefit of society; hungriest youth could not regard these parables as aid. The fierce passions belong to the author's mind; it has not pretended, or spied on civilization. Particularly in *In Bayswater*, the absence of praise and blame gives a terrific tragic tonality to the whole; one choir of instruments stilled, for a purpose. The purpose is an artificial savagery, deliberate and strong; furthered by Miss Butts' refusal to employ any modern convenience of interpretation or terminology. The parent devour-

ing its young; the cold girl warming herself by male catastrophe; the erotic friendship, drawn out and frustrated; "Festus like a thin rod incapable of evasion or compromise or the least adaptation," intolerably a suicide; the final reckoning of the friends—Homerich waste and slaughter, needless, pitiful: it draws from her no remark. The theme is a "hard, bright and sweet" male reality wasted and wounded by old female instincts, not swiftly enough altered to a new order—unrequired and perverted. The story is not as perfect as later ones will be; but they also may present no solution and no surcease.

For her work is an irresponsible evocation; the first and strangest resource of the human intellect, and, in our literature, longest in abeyance. Of all forms of utterance, narrative, the description of a mobile cluster of experiences, is the least easily comprehensible; the contrary appears to be true only because debased romancers have too long imitated a redundant theatre. The latter's devotees are bound to find "that which is done" in these stories much overlaid by that which merely is, the plot by something as displeasing as poetry. Their demands are in fashion; but fine writers have always differed from petty by understanding that the relation between experiencing itself and mere events is exactly that between the music and text of an opera.

As to mechanics and her system of speech, she combines a minimum of linear fluency with a maximum of swift continuity in emotion. Each movement or image stands out crisply, in full relief; intermediate phrases have been cut away. Very rarely her meaning depends on grammatical relations which take place in the ellipsis, and a part is lost. The eye does not predominate, and analogies are not made to prolong its portion of experience; but to illustrate or to probe into meaning: "A huge motor gauntlet like a dead animal." This prose is not something stretched between one mind and another, a mere telephone wire; it has weight and substance, "definitely an object of whatever shape lying upon the paper" (Dr Williams). In the dialogue, work of genius, the obliqueness of talk, its wide palette of meanings, are used with brevity and elegance; the violent atmospheres, the muscular haste, the sensual tints, the symbols and diagrams are handled with the balance of Congreve. The rhythm is subtle, short fluent jets retarded by spondaic forms. Never unnoticeable, it keeps the intellect nervous and

watchful, before which the illustrative violence, the extremes of tenderness and sweetness, bud and increase and burst, incredibly primitive and bright.

Once more, beauty is not featureless. By these means of style it has boundaries, differentiating figure and surface and scent: "By the centurion's hard fire there was another arrangement of life like a base scale played firmly." To see and exist, and to see exist: the appetite of a race of navigators, with large stone eyes:

"There were little pieces of meat classified and no carcasses. The poor like thick gold watch-chains, and little earrings stuck on cards." . . . "Into a city of charwomen. They climbed out of deep areas. Soon he saw they were everywhere, descending, rising, in their rhythm; young in glazed cotton furs, mature and very pregnant, old with scum in their eyes." . . . "Rain began. Wetted at dusk, the streets' patina of filth gleamed like stale fish, and out of the crests of the houses came noises of weeping that never was, never could be comforted."

Beyond these collected slums, England "hammered by the sea," its "naked sun" and "grey, savage grass" and "cows, that sharpen their teeth on their sides"; the Holy Land's "pool of hot wood," its "grey tent and its gilt bird"; France full of trenches, and Greece—a world heavy with characteristics.

Now that religion has been broken which lay embedded in faith, the shivered emotion attaches again in crystals to objects: a kind of awe and apprehension of meaning. This moody haughty mind, essentially religious, collects no drawing-room symbols; but gathers exactly the sense of ploughs, blades, and blood. It is rich in the scholarship of a golden bough, of a stamen of wood twelve feet long hung with a fox-pelt and feathers, of a dark grail. Strictly contemporary experience is lit by an antique fiery light; life an "infernal saga . . . coming up-to-date." The racial memory, the animal memory, has been strangely extended; and memory is the identifiable soul.

GLENWAY WESCOTT

MR WELLS' ANCIENTS

MEN LIKE GODS. *By H. G. Wells. 12mo. 327 pages.*
The Macmillan Company. \$2.

THE significance of Mr Wells' new essay in Utopianism is fully indicated in the title. He has turned a little way from the problem of what men ought to do, to the real problem of morals, what ought to be? He has not, in effect, created imaginary supermen, nor proposed ideal human figures. He has presented a group of beings in the image of men and women, has sketchily indicated what exists in their world, and has said, these men are like gods. They have little enough relation to God, the Invisible King; there are passages in the speech of Urthred which imply an atheism touching even that deity. But the residuum of the argument is clear. It is that the beings of this Utopia are godlike creatures, and that the Earthlings remain in the age of confusion because they do not recognize the attributes of the others as divine. In short Mr Wells despairs of changing man until he has changed god.

This may be sacrilegious, but it is not stupid; it is too close to the commonplaces of religious experience to be that, for it is only a contemporary way of praying for a change of heart. With such a theme the book must divide into two parts: the rendering of actuality, the state of heart *from* which, and the rendering of Utopia, the state of heart *to* which we must turn. The framework is classic in one respect—the introduction of Mr Barnstaple, the modern Gulliver; he is the pivot of both flanks, for he is of one world and wishes for the other; near the middle of the book he tries, rather awkwardly, to be the pivot of the action. The novelty of the book is in presenting the right wing—the group of modern men and women who reject the Utopia into which they are flung. The politician, the priest, the philosopher, the millionaire, the fool (aesthetes are fools as in Shaw) the silly women, present with a specious appearance of fairness the case against Utopia, and in a sense, the case for the present.

Naturally the presentation of the actual world is done with greater vigour, with more gusto, than the presentation of the ideal

which lacks savour entirely. It is a beautiful, well-ordered, purposefully-striving universe contrasted with our world of chaos, selfishness, and trust in God or Competition or Evolution. Conflict exists in this Utopia—conflict with the still unsubdued forces of nature. But there is no struggle of man against his fellow. There is scope for the great ambition to acquire and to use knowledge. There is room even for martyrdom.

The civilization of this Utopia is based upon Five Principles of which the first is the principle of Privacy, the second that of Free Movement, the third, Unlimited Knowledge, the fourth, that Lying is the Blackest Crime. Here Mr Wells interrupts the list; if he had not long ago repudiated, in precise words, the title of artist, I should imagine that the interlude is "for effect." The effect comes, in spite of him: the fifth principle is Free Discussion and Criticism. It will be seen that three of these five are governmental, that only the first and the fourth involve the individual, and the best thing about the others is that two of them are negative, are inhibitions against excessive interference with the private life. In other words, an enlightened liberalism could do much for this Utopia. Even the first principle is meagrely taken:

"All individual personal facts are private between the citizen and the public organization to which he entrusts them, and can be used only for his convenience and with his sanction. Of course all such facts are available for statistical uses, but not as individual personal facts."

The principle of privacy hardly extends to what the individual does, certainly not to what he is. It is understood that no individual would want to be or to do what would hinder the common good. The "Crowd-mind" has gone for ever, Mr Barnstaple discovers; at its best you could say that it has been displaced by the Universal Mind. But I feel that the individual mind has gone also, and it is characteristic that the Utopians communicate with each other simply by thinking; they do not talk.

The truth about Utopias is that they are all 110-proof. For all of our arguments that they won't work, break on the rock of the Utopian character which can make them work; and all our arguments that they are silly or trivial or inhuman are shattered by the

direct rebuttal that the arguments only prove how much we are in need of Utopia. Of Mr Wells' Utopias it may always be said that they are not small private revenges, and I say this not from knowledge of him or of his private life, but from knowledge of his books. It is part of his pleasure in living to believe in perfectability through science; his displeasure with monarchism, competition, and the Soviets of Russia never for a moment alters his good humour. He thinks life can be fine, must be made fine; he is more or less in love with the material and has profound confidence in the machine which is to transform it.

Why then is there a sort of blight over this new statement of his belief? Why is it so lifeless! I confess that I share none of the beliefs I ascribe to him, none I derive from his work; yet I am susceptible to his talents, to his almost ungovernable intensity and his actual creative gift. Why doesn't this Utopia even exasperate me? Is it possibly because Mr Wells doesn't care so much for it himself and has only written it to add another illusion to the world which (Anatole France has said) without illusion would perish of boredom; or is it that something has knocked the whole idea of Utopia, as well as all the special Utopias, into a cocked hat, and that that particular direction of human thought and emotion has no longer any bearing upon actual human existence?

GILBERT SELDES

PRO VITA MONASTICA

PRO VITA MONASTICA. By Henry Dwight Sedgwick.
8vo. 164 pages. Atlantic Monthly Press. \$3.50.

THIS is a very significant book, but the reading of it is a pleasure apart from this, for it is a model of literary style, delicate, polished, reserved, while the format of the volume is perfectly consonant with its matter, a very masterpiece of book-making.

Perhaps, indeed certainly, the quality of significance reveals itself in these respects as well as in the major fact that the book itself is utterly out of key with all the dominant tendencies of the time wherein lies its significance. So far as the present generation is concerned—perfect style in the writing of English is not a common aim, and even good things come before us in slovenly, headlong shape, or disguised in the cheap trappings of a rough colloquialism. The beauty of English as such (and there is no language that offers greater opportunities or more noble precedents) is almost a lost art and a forsaken ideal, and the jargon of journalism or of the scientific treatise is, if not the model consciously chosen, at least the determining influence working through the sub-conscious mind. Few indeed are the contemporary books like Compton Leith's *Sirenica* or (for a different *genre*) Henry Adams' *Mont-Saint-Michel* and *Chartres*, that are artistic triumphs of creative genius in the use of language, masterpieces of great style, and it is in this slender gathering that Mr Sedgwick belongs.

And again in the making of books, we have enough and to spare of "precious" and "distinctive" productions with their exaggerated effects in paper, typography, binding, but the volume that is in itself a work of art just because of its delicate composition of the tempting, subtle, but betraying elements in the printer's craft (some of Mr Updyke's publications for example) is rare, and therefore when so admirable a thing as this from the Atlantic Monthly Press comes before us, "as a stranger give it welcome."

Style, form, and matter are all harmonized here, and all work together to give the impression of escape, of refuge from a too insistent life that in its present estate has little to commend it except

the bare and primal fact that it is. It is heartening that of late at least a score of books have been published, all assailing our present form of civilization with bitter irony, sarcasm, ridicule. The old serene satisfaction of the fifty years that assembled around the turn of the century, is gone, and in its place has come disillusionment, with scathing depreciation following after. It is in America that the attack is most fast and furious, but constructive vision does not match destructive criticism, such as there is coming rather from England. For this reason it is the more encouraging that a book such as this should be put forward at this time, for it is essentially constructive, and gets deep down to the roots of things.

What Mr Sedgwick has found is no more than that which was a commonplace during the first fifteen centuries of the Christian Era, lost altogether amongst those peoples that accepted Protestantism, yet nevertheless of the very essence of Christianity, as Catholics have always known and as Mr Sedgwick has discovered for himself. In his preface he puts it in few words, and thus:

"I merely wish to lay stress upon the fact that, for one reason and another, Christianity, at least among Protestants, has cast aside, or dropped out, a great part of the ancient practise that, during many centuries, helped it adapt itself to human needs, enabled it to produce heroic and radiant personalities, and shed over it a poetry which it now lacks. I refer to the practise of withdrawal from the world of ordinary life and from the usual occupations of men, into some solitary or sequestered place, where in hermitage or monastery they might give themselves up to contemplation, meditation or prayer, and to such labours in library or garden as should best fit the mind to be the dwelling-place of whatever thoughts might seem to them the highest, best and most beautiful.

"And as, to my way of thinking, such sequestered habits and practises are of the essence of Christianity, for without them it goes about its tasks, halt and maimed, in helpless inadequacy, so also I believe that the individual life, unless it takes advantage of those practises, withdrawing apart to think high thoughts, and to reconsider by the light of such thoughts its hopes, ambitions, and desires, is, and must be, imperfect."

Through brief but penetrating studies of such as Saint Anthony,

Saint Benedict, Saint Thomas à Kempis, Eugénie de Guérin, he leads on to a consideration of the spiritual energy that brings the clarifying of vision, to be derived by the solitary or the recluse from the garden, the library, the oratory, and shows with great sympathy, but equal force, how from these the recollected recluse has achieved, and always may, "that peace the world cannot give," that world "absorbed in animal existence" where "cowboys afoot might as well try to stop a stampede of maddened steers as the reasoning few to guide the course of the multitude." It is this cloistered life that reveals reality. "In the monastic system we shall find recorded a great part of whatever success men have achieved in their search for spiritual wisdom," for "faith and imagination are the two distinguishing habits of mind, the two factors of knowledge, the two primal conditions of human existence; without them the senses and reason would be the very shadow of vanity," and it is faith and imagination that are destroyed by life as it is lived now, but edified in hermitage or cloister.

All this was and is a commonplace of Catholicism—not to speak of the East whether Buddhist or Brahmin—but the significant thing is that one should achieve this truth by paths in no way Catholic and should give it forth in this day and generation. Nothing could be dreamed of less consonant with contemporary methods and motives than the life of withdrawal, meditation, prayer, and intercession. All we think of, conceive of as desirable and potent, is an everlasting doing of something, it really doesn't very much matter what, so long as it means efficiency and mass-production; commissions, conferences, committees, conventions, drives, campaigns, and legislation. The spiritual quest, the retreat into the wilderness unstained by radios, motor cars, advertising, newspapers, bond-salesmen, and insurance solicitors; the desirability of getting acquainted with one's soul, and through this, with God—these are the things that at the most moderate estimate are regarded with indifference by the world, which has gone its troubled way with far other goals in view and by immeasurably alien paths. That success has been the issue is a thesis hardly tenable, but in the chaos of failure there are few that envisage the right way. What happens, by some intractable fate, is paralleled by our political and social courses, where, in some nominal monarchy, a popularized parliamentary system breaks down in venality and incom-

petence, and a revolutionary progress is made into anarchy by way of a theoretical "republic," as in Portugal, China, Russia, and the tottering states of the dismembered "Central Empires." So, as modernism shatters, the cry goes up for increased production, greater "efficiency," more mechanical inventions; for publicity, mass-action, more laws, and increased activity of every kind, with Mr Ford and Mr Edison and Dr Steinmetz and the "efficiency expert" as the prophets of regeneration.

Here is the significance of Mr Sedgwick's book, that it should come at this time, when few indeed will understand, fewer still accept it; yet it is written, and this means that here and there light is showing in darkness, and when after storm the clouds once break, even for the moment, the break presages fairer weather, and the clearing for a new day.

The truth that shines through the *Vita Monastica* (be it printed book or way of life) is implicit in Christianity and still not inactive in the Catholic part thereof. There are signs that it is revealing itself once more, and when it is given full emphasis where it is retained, and recovered where it has been lost, then the world may go on well for another period. Every development of formal monasticism (of which there are so many to-day) is welcome, but far more so such an evidence as this that reveals the recovery of this truth where it had been altogether lost.

There is nothing more interesting to-day than the watching of that process whereby one man and another finds his way back to ultimate truth through study of some manifestation of the life of the Middle Ages. It may be philosophy, economics, sociology, politics, literature, architecture, or some other of a dozen different things, the end is the same; the realization that here was a sane and rounded and beautiful life in comparison with which ours is barbarous, or worse. One fancies that in the present case the path to enlightenment has been Dante, as with another it may have been St Thomas Aquinas, or Chartres Cathedral, or the Statutes of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem. It is all curious and unexpected, but heartening to a degree; moreover it is cumulative, and in the end it may mean redemption.

There is a danger in the process, and that is the chance that the method may result in a certain over-intellectualizing of truths, the building up of a theory that may be right and yet not closely

enough related to life itself to achieve vitality. The result is that self acquires too prominent a place, and questions are determined, courses laid, in accordance with the reactions of this personal equation. If anything of this appears in the book under consideration, it is of the slightest, and no more than a feeling that the author has gone far, but has not yet quite achieved the great and vitalizing element that through St Benedict entered into the practice of withdrawal from the world, and from then on was the great glory of Christian society. I mean *fellowship* in withdrawal, and the loss of all sense of personal gain or gratification through this companionship and in the helping and saving of others. As Mr Sedgwick says, "No man can save his own soul without necessarily helping his brother save his soul likewise," and it is equally true that no man can save his brother's soul, or any part of him, without helping to save his own soul. The greatness of the Christian monastic system was that it balanced these two things in just equilibrium, adding thereto the element of comradeship, which was the best protection against egotism and undue regard for one's own soul and one's own immediate spiritual happiness.

RALPH ADAMS CRAM

GENTLE SORCERY

MOONSHINE AND CLOVER. A DOORWAY IN FAIRYLAND.
*By Laurence Housman. 8vo. 219 pages. Harcourt,
Brace and Company. \$2 each volume.*

IN THESE tales selected from four volumes published previously, the outstanding impression is that of moral sensibility; a heightened sense of the appropriateness of outward beauty to inward—as in the case of Mr Housman's novel, *The Sheepfold*. But whereas the austerity and calm but torrential force in *The Sheepfold* make it unique, there is variableness in the symmetry and in the power of the telling of these later stories. The fairy-tale, like the question, bespeaks faith in the outcome of what is not yet evolved; and in their prime quality of illusory credibility, Mr Housman's tales command belief. One reads eagerly until the end has been reached, infinitesimally disaffected by an occasional flaw. Although usually in the fairy-tale, good triumphs over evil and virtue is synonymous with beauty, an appearance of moral insouciance is essential; and in a number of these stories, one sees perhaps too plainly, the wish to bless. Also, evolving from an affection for the child mind and perhaps from a wish not to labour the matter, we have from time to time a kind of diminutive conversation as of an adult in the nursery, which is death to the illusion of make-believe. There is poetic security, however, in the statement, "he closed his eyes, and, with long silences between, spoke as one who prayed," and in the observation that Toonie's wife when her husband did not return, "became a kind of widow"; the pace is especially businesslike in this story of Toonie. Minute rapier-like shafts of crossing searchlights seem to play upon the "tight panting little bodies" whose sentinel Toonie outwitted, "picking him up by the slack of his breeches, so that his arms and legs trailed together along the ground." In *The Traveller's Shoes*, one is infected with the poison of

"Sister, sister; bring me your hair,
Of our mother's beauty give me your share.
You must grow pale, while I must grow fair!"

and sophisticated imagination in the metamorphosis by the blue moon of a pale country, is no enemy to realness: "All the world seemed carved out of blue stone. . . . The white blossoms of a cherry-tree had become changed into turquoise, and the tossing spray of a fountain as it drifted and swung was like a column of blue fire."

In the tradition of the house that Jack built, and of the stick that beat the dog, the fire that burned the stick, the water that put out the fire, there is newness in the evolving of the Prince's birth-day present.

"His fairygodmother had sent him a bird, but when he pulled its tail it became a lizard, and when he pulled the lizard's tail it became a mouse, and when he pulled the mouse's tail, it became a cat. . . . He pulled the cat's tail and it became a dog, and when he pulled the dog's it became a goat; and so it went on till he got to a cow. And he pulled the cow's tail and it became a camel, and he pulled the camel's tail and it became an elephant, and still not being contented, he pulled the elephant's tail and it became a guinea-pig. Now a guinea-pig has no tail to pull, so it remained a guinea-pig." Intricately perfect as a pierced ivory mosque, *The Prince with the Nine Sorrows* is a tale of nine sisters enchanted into peahens. Eight having refused to regain their identity at the sacrifice of their brother's life, the ninth after pecking out his heart, pecked out her own in remorse, substituting it for his and he, "taking up his own still beating heart, laid it into the place of hers so that which was which they themselves did not know."

In these two books there is a disparity in favour of *Moonshine* and *Clover*, there being perhaps but one story in a *Doorway in Fairyland*, *The Ratcatcher's Daughter*, which may surely be depended upon to remain in the mind. In this most civilized obverse of fox-hunting ethics, a gnome having got himself caught in a trap with a view to entrapping his captor, is found apparently "wriggling and beating to be free." As the price of freedom, he consents to give the ratcatcher all the gold in the world and to make his daughter pure gold so that the king's son will marry her. Then when the ratcatcher finds that the prince will marry her only in the event that she can be made natural, in order to effect a retransfor-

mation, he is obliged to relinquish to the gnome his last penny. The White Doe maintaining throughout the image of a creature springing this way and that across a narrow forest stream, A Capful of Moonshine with its theme of the man who wished to know "how one gets to see a fairy," The Gentle Cockatrice monumentally patient despite a recurring desire to identify its tail, and The Man Who Killed the Cuckoo, are tales one does not forget. This Mr Badman's progress, told with a laconic wonder and embodying newly as it does, the moral contained in the story of Midas, is an account of a man who "lived in a small house with a large garden" and "took no man's advice about anything." Finding that the poisonous voice that he had disliked at a distance proceeded from himself, he "felt his eyes turning inwards, so that he could see into the middle of his body. And there sat the cuckoo." We find him eventually "sailing along under the stars," tied into a bed of cuckoo feathers, "complete and compact; and inside him was the feeling of a great windmill going round and round and round."

One must not monopolize; one need not avenge oneself; in improving the morals of the world, one should begin by improving one's own; these are the mordant preoccupations about which Mr Housman's fancy plays.

MARIANNE MOORE

PROPERTIES

THE HUNDRED AND ONE HARLEQUINS. *By Sacheverell Sitwell. 8vo. 96 pages. Boni and Liveright. \$1.75.*

IN England to-day, where the majority of poets are subjected to the same literary and social influences, their verse has acquired an irritating sameness. Virtues recur and faults recur, of which the greatest is to lack distinction. Other poets, a minority, observe this fault, and seeing the herd rush past them down a highroad, they turn off deliberately into a lane. Their direction is determined by that of the majority, being exactly opposite. They are apt to reach a similar destination. Except in reference to the majority they cannot be understood; they throw themselves to the other tip of a balance; they aim to be corrective instead of total, and they persist in this course even when it involves the suicide of their career. Sacheverell Sitwell belongs to such a minority.

Imagine the background and his reaction. . . . The room is too full of furniture, too full of well-dressed people. Most of them are bores. To escape them he conducts a conversation with his friends, entirely in euphuisms, under the glare of a hundred electric lights. Suddenly the butler draws back the curtain and you discover sunlight falling, "on far roofs, a sheaf of arrows." The landscape is italianate, with arbours, fountains, trees, and a blue, blue sky. It is ruled into squares by tight-ropes, over which harlequins perform. Looking closer you discover that the window is not a window, but an oil painting. In a brief silence is heard the conversation of the bores. To escape, to horrify them, to do everything in their opposite is Mr Sitwell's principal aim.

The bores are Georgian poets or people who write for magazines and praise the Georgian poets. To contradict them is to be modern. To be modern is to be obscure. To be obscure is to be superior to critics, who, failing to comprehend one's work, are reduced to making remarks like the following: "Strange, rare, and subtly intriguing . . . real, though brittle magic . . . one's sense is snared . . . the mind is drugged: the senses get their pleasure." Mr Sitwell is really not half so bad as that.

His qualities are other than were mentioned; in reality he makes little appeal to the senses. His magic is almost purely verbal. He keeps a hundred bright words in the air at the same time, like one of his own harlequins juggling. For this purpose he likes words which have been worn smooth, words which slip through the fingers and leave no impression. In opposition to the Georgians he avoids too-definite phrases: he will mention ripe field, but never rye fields; tall trees, but never ash trees or sycamores. And he runs interminably on, piling one faint image over another till they cease to convey any image whatever, and never once abrading the wall of sense.

"And so, while smaller men may make
the soft singing and the golden shake
with which the ripe fields greet the sun,
into the joys for which they run
tired lives into a broken mould,
and then renounce the joy and fold . . ."

And so for 268 lines, and this in a poem which is far from being his longest. The Neptune Hotel has twice this bulk. He writes with a fatal ease which leads him to dilate the matter of fifty or sixty lines into the three or four hundred verses of a poem as vast and as cluttered as an afternoon in a department store. His epics are crumbly and diffuse. There is only one of them—*The Hochzeit of Hercules*—which is held tightly together by the vigour of its fantasy. And good as this poem is, it lacks the qualities of his shorter pieces.

Here, where he confines himself to a page or two, there is no question of glibness or being diffuse. *Week-end*, *Fables*, *Mrs H . . . the Lady from Babel*. His poems like these are so frugal and so complete that it is impossible to dissect them into quotations. Their metres and images are fresh, their movement vigorous; they have a strangeness which is not according to the formula of Mr X, and hence they are more effective weapons against the Georgians than a dozen volumes of polemic.

However, these latter are unaware of the attack. Having finished their act they quit the stage in a dignified manner. Mr Sitwell rushes in to make a great bundle of their properties: moons, trees, rivers in spate, a cage of nightingales, with all of which he

staggers into the wings. He returns with his own accessories, which include italianate landscapes, a hundred and one pasteboard harlequins, and a stuffed unicorn suitable for a hat rack. Press on the horn and he will stamp his silver hooves. The stage is too full of furniture and well-dressed people, most of whom are bores. A conversation dies in euphuisms. . . . Now Mr Sitwell grows excited. He leaps into the wings and drags out new properties: clowns, billboards, subways. The play continues. It has flashes of a new brilliance, but it is "talky and unreal"; in general it bears a surprising resemblance to the comedy of the Georgians. The audience yawns. There is too much scenery which, though freshly painted, remains painted scenery. The more it changes the more it stays the same. . . . A man is the stature of his enemies. Nobody calls the Georgian poets gigantic. By force of combatting them Mr Sitwell has assumed their likeness, but not in all respects. The Georgians were dull, and yet with an effort they were readable. It takes someone more clever to be profoundly boring.

MALCOLM COWLEY

BRIEFER MENTION

ANNETTE AND BENNETT, by Gilbert Cannan (12 mo, 315 pages; Seltzer: \$2) is the third of a series dealing with the Lawries and the Folyats. One is asked to listen to the same speeches from James Lawrie as he voiced in the earlier volumes, as he glories in his failure and clings doggedly to being treated as a leper in his own house. One can love Annette, and for her sake put up with the Lawries, but they are bitter pills. And one can hope that conditions in English towns will improve, and that Annette's children, when it is their turn to have a novel written about them, will display an inheritance of traits from their mother's rather than from their father's side.

THE DESERT HORIZON, by E. L. Grant Watson (12 mo, 302 pages; Knopf: \$2.50) is a simply-told tale of the Australian desert and of a boy who prefers his sandy miles to any other place on earth. He is, so Mr Watson tells us, "the willing slave of life and the desert . . . hardly as yet aware of his captivity." There is in this book, as in the author's earlier works, a fitting of human life into an accepted pattern. Mr Watson is a trained ethnologist, and has satisfied himself that men must make as simple an adjustment to environment and to other men as animals make to their jungles and their mates. His people are, with few exceptions, elemental, animal-fibred, with their unhumorous minds focused on their sheep herding or their pursuit of a mate to share their incessant struggle to wring a living out of difficult mediums. One misses something, however, in so direct and unsubtle an account of life.

THE LONE WINTER, by Anne Bosworth Greene (12 mo, 379 pages; Century: \$2.25). All that is required of any reader of this thoroughly delightful book, is a liking for open country and animals. The story is of a winter spent on a Vermont mountain farm by a woman who is an artist, a writer, and an expert in the raising of Shetland ponies. She is a most truthful person, not rhapsodizing to the extent of concealing her occasional fits of depression over remoteness and lack of human society, nor her delight in the prospects of a visit from her boarding-school daughter, or from her curious, kindly friends in the village below.

STORIES, DREAMS, AND ALLEGORIES, by Olive Schreiner (12mo, 153 pages; Stokes: \$1.75) may add nothing to the reputation of their author, yet they contain much work in her happiest vein. They are characterized by the same butterfly beauty, the same imagination and simplicity as mark her previously published books; they range from the verge of realism to the rainbow clouds of fantasy; at times they reveal a deep but unaffected emotion, at times they are beautifully symbolical, and occasionally they are warm and vivid in their criticism of life.

THE HIDDEN ROAD, by Elsie Singmaster (12 mo, 333 pages; Houghton, Mifflin: \$2) led to mastery over the very impulses that had sent Phoebe Starnard along it. The book is a delicately handled, finished study of a girl whose mind was well above the average, but whose intellectual curiosity had always to be whipped into action through her desire to captivate a lover. There is no attempt to surround Phoebe with glamour. Her faults are insisted upon, and yet she is a very delightful heroine. The minor characters of the book are quite as artistically drawn as Phoebe; the backgrounds are the habitat of real people. Indeed the book ranks high as a well-written, genuine work of art, one of the best novels of the year.

BLINDFOLD, by Orrick Johns (12mo, 259 pages; Lieber & Lewis: \$2) sets out to be defiantly modern in theme and treatment, but gradually fades into a background not much more revolutionary than that of *Way Down East*. The ingredients are largely those of Newton Fuessle's recent *Jessup*—an illegitimate child who "makes good" in New York, and a painter father—although here the pattern is worked out to a tragic conclusion. Technically, the shift in the story from the father to the daughter weakens the interest; the connecting thread is not strong enough. Briefly, a novel which starts off realistically and ends melodramatically.

The attempt in **CONQUISTADOR**, by Katharine Fullerton Gerould (12mo, 205 pages; Scribner: \$1.50) at a drama of conflicting bloods, Scotch and Spanish, succeeds in adding a thin narrative to the already sizeable literature of Puritan domination. For though the Spanish strain in Wharton Cameron, engineer-caballero, ties him by pledge to the *hacienda* in Mexico, the Puritan in him simply uses this setting for contrast and exploitation, and is in every main instance the psychological determinant. At the first genuine approach of passion, Cameron "threw back his head and stared at the dim rafters," saying to the charmer, Dona Flora, "You don't tempt me." And, even at the end, rejected by a one-time Boston sweetheart, forced to accept a Mexican girl because of this, Wharton loves her, Manuelita, chastely, only for one thing: a son and heir, and through him the perpetuation of Santa Eulalia, the *hacienda*. One is tempted, however, to overlook this failure of intention, for the book's banalities: "Men are men. And women are women"—"A caballero is a caballero still; cattle are cattle," et cetera, are not often to be found in contemporary writing.

BALLOONS, by Elizabeth Bibesco (12mo, 168 pages; Doran: \$2) is the reverse of literary. Its author has the faculty, capitalized in newspaper serials and stories of the smart set and by all writers of ability, of getting down to business at once, touching the patient where he lives. She goes in for being frightfully subtle. In one breath she is perceptive, subtle, ingenious, glittering, tinny, thin, and complacent. Her cleverness betrays her. When she stops using people as mouthpieces for her dazzling little phrases and turns her shrewd eye on them, putting her cleverness to the laborious task of learning to project them dramatically, her books will be worth waiting for.

THE HOUSE OF THE ENEMY, by Camille Mallarmé (12mo, 256 pages; McBride: \$2) is a highly-seasoned Spanish dish, served steaming hot with passion and with a dash of Benavente sauce. What there is about these La Mancha amours which renders them such family affairs is still more or less of a mystery; marriage seems to be an avenue of intrigue dotted with in-laws. Aside from its violent story, which doesn't quite compel credence, this novel has colourful moments and a quick-paced narrative style.

THE PUPPET SHOW, by Martin Armstrong (12 mo, 153 pages; Brentano: \$2) zigzags between fine, full-bodied descriptive prose and somewhat frail excursions into the fantastic. When Mr Armstrong looks at life realistically, he writes in vivid and incisive style, but when he interposes the rose-tinted spectacles of allegory, things seem a little out of focus and not half so much worth looking upon. One would suggest more work in the mood of his admirable *Old Alan* and *The Emigrants*, and—if he insists upon being intermittently fanciful—fewer fables and better ones.

LOYALTIES, by John Galsworthy (12mo, 110 pages; Scribner: \$1). There is less of thought and of meaning, less of dramatic vigour and power about this play than about some of its predecessors. The author has nothing either new or significant to say regarding loyalties; he tends toward the commonplace both in plot and in theme; and one misses the energy and the vitality of *Strife*, *Justice*, and *The Mob*.

OXFORD POETRY—1921 (12mo, 64 pages; Appleton: \$1) and **OXFORD POETRY—1922** (12mo, 48 pages; Appleton: \$1) are collections of poems written by Oxford undergraduates during the last two years. Although these "poets of promise" can boast of such men as Robert Graves, Louis Golding, and Edmund Blunden in their host, there is not one unusual poem in either volume. And their fulfilment has been like their promise—conventional, dull, servile boot-licking of a hackneyed muse gone in the mouth.

In **THE ROVING CRITIC**, by Carl Van Doren (12mo, 262 pages; Knopf: \$2.50) "the sense of the vividness of life" is proclaimed as the all-inclusive standard by which criticism should judge other forms of literature. The author does not realize that vitality and verisimilitude are the easiest of qualities to simulate. He has the habit, at once wasteful and penurious, of stating a thought without either working it out or provoking the reader to do so. His ideas, expressed in ungainly and distorted prose, are sufficient to enliven the briefer papers, but they lack the durability, logic, and subtlety that differentiates criticism from the more evanescent book reviewing. He seems the victim of time, space, and "aliveness."

DISENCHANTMENT, by C. E. Montague (12mo, 280 pages; Brentano: \$2) tries to do for the conduct of the Great War what Gibbon did for the Church, with much the same manner and a fraction of the brilliance. The fact that the author's allusive, elaborate, highly polished weapons are turned against the conduct rather than the cause definitely places him.

MUMBO JUMBO, by Henry Clews, Jr. (8vo, 276 pages; Boni & Liveright) consists of sixty-one pages of introduction modelled closely upon Rabelais, sixty-five pages descriptive of the characters of the play, this in the manner of Shaw, and then four acts of a satirical comedy devoted to an exposé of the modern pursuit of the aesthetic and ultra in art. A book along these lines is undoubtedly in order, but in this instance, the remedy is worse than the disease.

LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY, by E. M. Tenison (8vo, 348 pages; Macmillan: \$5) seems to have been composed with more material than equipment; it is earnest but unorganized—an unassimilated memoir filled with documents, divagations, and devotion. A reader with the leisure to do his own weeding will discover, among much extraneous and some quite valueless matter, an adequate summary of the life of the poet.

MODERN COLOUR, by Carl Gordon Cutler and Stephen C. Pepper (12mo, 163 pages; Harvard University Press: \$2) is a bustling little tome spun round a patent colour wheel. The authors have invented a magic disc which will enable painters to reproduce nature swiftly and with automatic perfection. The invention will be of incalculable service to belated Impressionists, photographic painters, postal card colourists, admirers of Russian realism, academic instructors, and undergraduates with a talent for copying.

LINE, by Edmund J. Sullivan (8vo, 190 pages; Scribner: \$3.75). A successful illustrator shows how it is done. The profounder problems of aesthetics are discussed and clarified: freehand drawing, reed pens, the legitimacy of cross hatching, formal perspective, gradation in line, shadows, local colour, setting up a figure, et cetera. Mr Sullivan has literary ability—if the book were not illustrated with his own drawings, we might wonder if he were not also an artist.

MOTION PICTURES IN EDUCATION, by Don Carlos Ellis and Laura Thornborough (8vo, 284 pages; Crowell: \$2.50). One does not quarrel with the statement that "the more senses utilized in conveying knowledge, the better the result" and one conceives through the presentation of certain subjects in this book of practical information for teachers, the possibility of supplementing what seems to be poverty in the average child and adult, of knowledge by association. Although in the case of "films purporting to be historical and literary," one mistrusts a conception of the deluge in which a lion cub is a tiny replica of the lion which carries it, and a Solomon's Court with mural decorations which appear to be stencilled representations of Alaskan tribal spirits, one perceives the value of films which portray scenic wonders, plant and animal life, civic and domestic thrift, industrial processes, progress in mechanics and the evolution of commerce. The chapter, moreover, *How to Use Films in Teaching* with its insistence upon repetition and supplementary reading, upon exact preparation on the part of the teacher—with its pedagogic genius in exposition and the recapitulating quiz—is an enthralling demonstration of the author's facile assertion that "seeing is believing."

THE DEMONIAK IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE

ONE man on the American stage, and one woman, are possessed—Al Jolson and Fanny Brice. Their demons are not of the same order, but together they represent all we have of the Great God Pan, and we ought to be grateful for it. For in addition to being more or less a Christian country, America is a Protestant community and a business organization—and none of these units is peculiarly prolific in the creation of demoniac individuals. We can bring forth Roosevelts—dynamic creatures, to be sure; but the fury and the exultation of Jolson is a hundred times higher in voltage than that of Roosevelt; we can produce courageous and adventurous women who shoot lions or manage construction gangs and remain pale beside the extraordinary “cutting loose” of Fanny Brice.

To say that each of these two is possessed by a demon is a mediaeval and perfectly sound way of expressing their intensity of action. It does not prove anything—not even that they are geniuses of a high rank, which in my opinion they are. I use the word possessed because it connotes a quality lacking elsewhere on the stage, and to be found only at moments in other aspects of American life—in religious mania, in good jazz bands, in a rare outbreak of mob violence. The particular intensity I mean is exactly what you do not see at a baseball game, but may at a prizefight, nor in the productions of David Belasco, nor at a political convention; you may see it on the Stock Exchange and you can see it, canalized and disciplined, but still intense, in our skyscraper architecture. It was visible at moments in the old Russian Ballet.

In Jolson there is always one thing you can be sure of: that whatever he does, he does at the highest possible pressure. I do not mean that one gets the sense of his effort, for his work is at times the easiest seeming, the most effortless in the world. Only he never saves up—for the next scene, or the next week, or the next show. His generosity is extravagant; he flings into a comic song or a three-minute impersonation so much energy, violence, so much of the *totality* of one human being, that you feel it would suffice for a hundred others. In the days when the runway was planked down

the centre of every good theatre in America, this galvanic little figure, leaping and shouting—yet always essentially dancing and singing—upon it was the concentration of our national health and gaiety. In Row, Row, Row he would bounce up on the runway, propel himself by imaginary oars over the heads of the audience, draw equally imaginary slivers from his bottom, and infuse into the song something wild and roaring and insanelly funny. The very phonograph record of his famous Toreador song is full of vitality. Even in later days when the programme announces simply "Al Jolson" (about 10:15 P. M. in each of his reviews) he appears and sings and talks to the audience and dances off—and when he has done more than any other ten men, he returns and blandly announcing that "You ain't heard nothing yet" proceeds to do twice as much again. He is the great master of the one-man show because he gives so much while he is on that the audience remains content while he is off—and his electrical energy almost always develops activity in those about him.

If it were necessary, a plea could be made for violence *per se* in the American theatre, because everything tends to prettify and restrain, and the energy of the theatre is dying out. But Jolson, who lacks discipline almost entirely, has other qualities besides violence. He has an excellent baritone voice, a good ear for dialect, a nimble presence, and a distinct sense of character. Of course it would be impossible not to recognize him the moment he appears on the stage; of course he is always Jolson—but he is also always Gus and always Inbad the Porter, and always Bombo. He has created a way of being for the characters he takes on; they live specifically in the mad world of the Jolson show; their wit and their bathos are singularly creditable characteristics of themselves—not of Jolson. You may recall a scene—I think the show was called *The Midnight Express*, or *The Honeymoon Express*—in which a lady knocks at the door of a house. From within comes the voice of Jolson singing, "You made me love you, I didn't wanna do it, I didn't wanna do it"—the voice approaches, dwindles away, resumes—it is a swift characterization of the lazy servant coming to open the door and ready to insult callers since the master is out. Suddenly the black face leaps through the doorway and cries out, "We don' want no ice," and is gone. Or Jolson as the black slave of Columbus, reproached by his master for a long absence. His lips begin to

quiver, his chin to tremble; the tears are approaching when his human independence softly asserts itself and he wails, "We all have our *moments*." It is quite true, for Jolson's technique is the exploitation of these moments; he has himself said that he is the greatest master of hokum in the business, and in the theatre the art of hokum is to make each second count for itself, to save any moment from dulness by the happy intervention of a slap on the back, or by jumping out of character and back again, or any other trick. For there is no question of legitimacy here—everything is right if it makes 'em laugh.

He does more than make 'em laugh; he gives them what I am convinced is a genuine emotional effect ranging from the thrill to the shock. I remember coming home after eighteen months in Europe, during the war, and stepping from the boat to one of the first nights of Sinbad. The spectacle of Jolson's vitality had the same quality as the impression I got from the New York sky-line—one had forgotten that there still existed in the world a force so boundless, an exaltation so high, and that any one could still storm Heaven with laughter and cheers. He sang on that occasion 'N Everything and Swanee. I have suggested elsewhere that hearing him sing Swanee is what book reviewers and young girls loosely call an experience. I know what Jolson does with false sentiment; here he was dealing with something which by the grace of George Gershwin came true; there was no necessity for putting anything over. In the absurd blackface which is so little negroid that it goes well with diversions in Yiddish accents, Jolson created image after image of longing, and his existence through the song was wholly in *its* rhythm. Five years later I heard Jolson in a second-rate show, before an audience listless or hostile, sing this out-dated and forgotten song, and create again, for each of us seated before him, the same image—and saw also the tremendous leap in vitality and happiness which took possession of the audience as he sang it. It was marvellous. In the first weeks of Sinbad he sang the words of 'N Everything as they are printed. Gradually (I saw the show in many phases) he interpolated, improvised, always with his absolute sense of rhythmic effect; until at the end it was a series of amorous cries and shouts of triumph to Eros. I have heard him sing also the absurd song about "It isn't raining rain, It's raining violets" and remarked him modulating that from sentimentality into a conscious

bathos, with his gloved fingers flittering together and his voice rising to absurd *fortissimi* and the general air of kidding the piece.

He does not generally kid his Mammy songs—as why should he who sings them better than any one else? He cannot underplay anything, he lacks restraint, and he leans on the second-rate sentiment of these songs, until they are forced to render up the little that is real in them. I dislike them and dislike his doing them—as I dislike Belle Baker singing *Elie, Elie!* But it is quite possible that my discomfort at these exhibitions is proof of their quality. They and a few very cheap jokes and a few sly remarks about sexual perversions are Jolson's only faults. They are few. For a man who has, year after year, established an intimate relation with no less than a million people every twelvemonth, he is singularly uncorrupted. That relation is the thing which sets him so far above all the other one-man-show stars. Eddie Cantor gives at times the effect of being as energetic; Wynn is always and Tinney sometimes funnier. But no one else, except Miss Brice, so holds an audience in the hollow of the hand. The hand is steady; the audience never moves. And on the great nights when everything is right, Jolson is driven by a power beyond himself. One sees that he knows what he is doing, but one sees that he doesn't half realize the power and intensity with which he is doing it. In those moments I cannot help thinking of him as a genius.

Quite to that point Fanny Brice hasn't reached. She hasn't, to begin with, the physical vitality of Jolson. But she has a more delicate mind and a richer humour—qualities which generally destroy vitality altogether, and which only enrich hers. She is first a great *farceur*; and in her songs she is exactly in the tradition of Yvette Guilbert, without the range, so far as we know, which enabled Mme Guilbert to create the whole of mediaeval France for us in ten lines of a song. The quality, however, is the same, and Fanny's evocations are as vivid and as poignant as Yvette's—they require from us exactly the same tribute of admiration. She has grown in power since she sang and made immortal, *I Should Worry*. Hear her now creating the tragedy of *Second-Hand Rose* or of the one *Florodora Baby*—"five little dumbbells got married for money And I got married for love. . . ." These things are done with two-thirds of Yvette Guilbert's material missing, for there are no accessories and although the words (some of the best are by

Blanche Merrill) are good, the music isn't always distinguished. And the effects are irreproachable. Give Fanny a song she can get her teeth into, *Mon Homme*, and the result is less certain, but not less interesting. This was one of a series of realistic songs for Mistinguett who sang it very much as Yvonne George did when she appeared in America. Miss Brice took it *lento affetuoso*; since the precise character of the song had changed a bit from its rather more outspoken French original. Miss Brice suppressed Fanny altogether in this song—she was being, I fear, “a serious artist”; but she is of such an extraordinary talent that she can do even this. Yvonne George sang it better simply because the figure she evoked as *Mon Homme* was exactly the fake *apache* about whom it was written, and not the “my feller” who lurked behind Miss Brice. It was amusing to learn that without a Yiddish accent and without those immense rushes of drollery, without the enormous gawkishness of her other impersonations, Miss Brice could put a song over. But I am for Fanny against Miss Brice and to Fanny I return.

Fanny is one of the few people who “make fun.” She creates that peculiar quality of entertainment which is wholly light-hearted and everything else is added unto her. Of this special quality nothing can be said; one either sees it or doesn't, savours it or not. Fanny arrives on the scene with an indescribable gesture—after seeing it twenty times I believe that it consists of a feminine salute, touching the forehead and then flinging out her arm to the topmost gallery. There is magic in it, establishing her character at once—the magic must reside in her incredible elbow. She hasn't so much to give as Jolson, but she gives it with the same generosity, there are no reserves, and it is all for fun. Her Yiddish *Squow* (how else can I spell that amazing effect?) and her *Heiland Lassie* are examples—there isn't an *arrière-pensée* in them. “The Chiff is after me . . . he says I appil to him . . . he likes my type” it is the complete give-away of herself and she doesn't care.

And this carelessness goes through her other exceptional qualities of caricature and satire. For the first there is the famous Vamp, in which she plays the crucial scene of all the vampire stories, precluding it with the first four lines of the poem Mr Kipling failed to throw into the wastepaper basket, and fatuously adding, “I can't get over it”—after which point everything is flung into another plane—the hollow laughter, the haughty gesture, the pretended

compassion, that famous defence of the vampire which here, however, ends with the magnificent line, "I may be a bad woman, but I'm awful good company." In this brief episode she does three things at once: recites a parody, imitates the moving picture vamp, and creates through these another, truly comic character. For satire it is Fanny's special quality that with the utmost economy of means she always creates the original in the very process of destroying it, as in two numbers which are exquisite, her present opening song in vaudeville with its reiterations of Victor Herbert's *Kiss Me Again*, and her *Spring Dance*. The first is pressed far into burlesque, but before she gets there it has fatally destroyed the whole tedious business of polite and sentimental concert-room vocalism; and the second (Fanny in ballet, with her amazingly angular parody of five-position dancing) puts an end for ever to that great obsession of ours, classical interpretative dancing.

Fanny's refinement of technique is far beyond Jolson's; her effects are broad enough, but her methods are all delicate. The frenzy which takes hold of her is as real as his. With him she has the supreme pleasure of knowing that she can do no wrong—and her spirits mount and intensify with every moment on the stage. She creates rapidly and her characterizations have an exceptional roundness and fulness; when the demon attends there is nothing she cannot do.

It is noteworthy that these two stars bring something to America which America lacks and loves—they are, I suppose, two of our most popular entertainers—and that both are racially out of the dominant caste. Possibly this accounts for their fine carelessness about our superstitions of politeness and gentility. The medium in which they work requires more decency and less frankness than usually exist in our private lives; but within these bounds Jolson and Brice go farther, go with more contempt for artificial notions of propriety, than any one else. Jolson has re-created an ancient type, the scalawag servant with his surface dulness and hidden cleverness, a creation as real as *Sganarelle* or the figure behind all of Chaplin's variations, the one the French call *Charlot*. And Fanny has torn through all the conventions and cried out that gaiety still exists. They are parallel lines surcharged with vital energy. I should like to see that fourth-dimensional show in which they will meet.

GILBERT SELDES

THE THEATRE

TWO new revues. **THE VANITIES OF 1923** is an attempt to do the Music Box in terms of the Winter Garden, but it has a subtle flavour of bad taste which is all its own. Joe Cook is the one sound spot. His old act perhaps suffers a little in spontaneity by being transferred from vaudeville to a revue: they have made him wear shiny shoes and a correct blue serge suit, with a handkerchief sticking out of the pocket, and I cannot but feel that his old high vein of lunacy is a little cramped; but he reveals unsuspected powers of burlesque acting in a skit with Peggy Joyce in which he impersonates Wesley Brown, "of the Six Brown Brothers," a musician living in Paris, who lures an elegant lady to his apartment and seduces her by playing the Jew's harp.—**THE FASHIONS OF 1924** is, on the other hand, rather agreeable—nothing very dazzling: a comic prize fight, some pretty girls in gym suits, a skit about the servant problem, and a fantastic ballet depicting "the bewildering fantasies of an imaginative man who, through continual puzzling over the mysteries of life, becomes insane." But it is one of the better summer shows; it does not exhaust you with its banality.

Both of these revues seem to be produced in association with prominent dressmakers and furriers, who use them as advertising mediums. The advertisers have already laid waste the countryside, achieved a censorship over the contents of magazines, and reduced the works of the great artists and savants to finely printed little blocks of text, which are used to wad out large pages on Campbell's Soup and Vacuum Cup Tires, and now, it appears, they are beginning to determine the character of theatrical entertainment. It is not inconceivable that the day will come when works of art of all kinds will be produced to promote the sale of motor-cars and canned salad dressing. This is a prospect which, I suppose, will be hailed with cheers by Mr Matthew Josephson, who regards the advertisers as the genuine artists and the people who object to the commercial ideal as contemptible "small persecuted colonies"; but I confess I am on the side of the persecuted. I cannot get over the idea that people who pursue the arts for their own sake deserve more respect than the people who hire themselves out

as ballyhoos for breakfast foods and deodorants. But now it seems I have the literary snobs against me as well as the manufacturers, and since I have read that the editor of *Broom* considers the copy of advertising writers more artistically important than the poetry of Elinor Wylie, I am a little timid about asserting in a magazine as cultivated as this one that I am annoyed at seeing theatrical entertainments run as adjuncts to the fur business.

But I will assert without hesitation that *SEVENTH HEAVEN* ought to be censored—if anything is to be censored. I have just seen this play for the first time after its triumphant run of a whole season and I protest that it contains the most frightful moral idea I have ever encountered on stage or screen—and it is only the other day that I saw a movie heroine not only restored to perfect tranquillity herself, but also completely cleared of guilt in the eyes of everybody else by discovering that her husband, whom she had tried to poison, had actually died from some other cause. In *SEVENTH HEAVEN* Mr Austin Strong shows us a faithful little French *gamine* who falls in love with an atheist street-cleaner. This fellow sneers freely at "*le bon dieu*" and tries to dissuade his mistress from believing in Him. But Chico goes off to war and the day that the armistice is signed they tell Diane that her lover is dead—whereupon she flies into a fury of grief and turns bitterly upon the good old abbé who has been trying to comfort her: "He was right after all!" she cries, "I know now there can be no *bon dieu*!" Then immediately Chico appears; he has not been killed at all; and Diane quickly changes her mind. "I know now that the abbé was right!" she sobs. "There is a *bon dieu* after all!"—Well, my feeling is that this idea, which is presented not merely as the cry of a simple heart, but apparently as the moral theme of the play, would be an excellent subject for suppression. I don't see why the essentially truthful, if rather squalid, tragedy of *The God of Vengeance* should be banished from the New York stage while it is permitted to teach people that God is good because, in a war where seven million men were killed, He has rescued one woman's lover.

EDMUND WILSON

COMMENT

PROFESSOR MUENSTERBERG once defined the three stages of a nation's development as provincial, cosmopolitan, and national, and placed America—if we remember rightly—in a phase of transition between cosmopolitanism and nationalism. But nationalism is simply a fusion, a reconciliation, of the two preceding stages: nationalists being men who see their environment from both "close up" and "long shot." At the present time there are varying shades of such nationalists concerning themselves with *belles-lettres* in America, the two prominent divisions being the surviving members of the Seven Arts, and the "pure" artists, or what Gorham B. Munson has called the "skyscraper primitives." There are also several shades of people who are writing local colour stories, or stories with or without happy endings, or stories with a surprise in the last paragraph, or poems in dialect, et cetera—and we pass on in haste and embarrassment.

Looking back over the old futurist pamphlets of 1909, one is astonished to find that nothing new has come into the world since that time, and the skyscraper primitives have taken over, more or less articulately, the entire futurist credo. Their essential programme is one of dogged optimism. They can find, in advertising, movies, political buncombe, jazz, corrupt business tactics, bootleg, Billy Sunday, and so on, an endless "wealth" of striking and picturesque material. Leaving aside the humanistic consideration, they try simply to re-give the sensational values which are thrown into relief by such material. There is no beauty, there is only intensity. And a city like New York can claim their enthusiasm, not because it is a harmonious unit functioning in such a way as to produce the most widely developed type of human life (which they know well enough it is not) but because it is so intensely, so characteristically, itself.

The negative quality in the criticism of the Seven Arts group is caused by their hankering after traditional beauty, beauty with the connotations which the word has traditionally held. There is nothing in Bertrand Russell's article of last month's *DIAL* to conflict essentially with their attitude. Indeed, any humanistic approach to

the present state of society must emphasize the negative quality of criticism; so that the skyscraper primitives, in order to obviate this negativism, have decided to alter their approach. One can enjoy the whirr of a smoothly running motor, or one can see only the wreckage in human life which lies behind that motor—and one is respectively skyscraper primitive or Seven Arts. Or on a wider plane, one could make the distinction between writing a book in which there are good actions and bad actions, and writing a book in which there are simply interesting actions.

It is no place here to toss up between the two. While pudency forbids us to learn from *The Literary Review* and discover that yes and no, both sides are right and both are wrong. But we do suggest that the skyscraper primitives have taken the harder task, for they must always tread on the uncomfortable verge of writing a Chamber of Commerce literature. As to their omission of humanism, they can answer that it is not the province of the artist to decide whether a given sensation is an asset or a detriment to the community. They accept the sensation simply as a fact, and exploit it. Which they can do with impunity, provided that they are content to leave art on the plane of chess playing or baseball, simply one more outlet for human energy. (This fact underlies the growing prevalence among the intellectuals for the detective story or the adventure story, where the display of skill without content is "purest.") Because there is a great deal of this element in art, they postulate (if they are thorough enough) a special aesthetic sense, and see art as the minister to that sense.

In either case, both Seven Arts and skyscraper primitive have gained the faith to turn intently upon their own situation. For they are aware that the machine is the dominant factor in contemporary life, and that America is the most highly mechanized country in the world, so that for better or worse the course of society for the next era is most likely to be settled in American terms. Perhaps this is the one allowable form of patriotism.

